THE
Certainty and *Neceſſity*
OF
Religion in General:
Or, the Firſt
Grounds and Principles
OF
Humane Duty
Eſtabliſh'd;

In Eight Sermons Preach'd at S. *Martins in the Fields* at the Lecture for the Year 1697, founded by the Honourable *Robert Boyle*, Eſquire.

By *Francis Gaſtrell*, D. D. Canon of *Chriſt-Church*, and Preacher to the Honourable Society of *Lincolns-Inn.*

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BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE

Moſt Reverend Father in God *Thomas* Lord Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*.

Sir *Henry Aſhurſt*, Baronet;
Sir *John Rotheram*, Serjeant at Law;
John Evelyn Senior. Eſquire,

Truſtees by the Appointment of the Honorable *ROBERT BOYLE*, Eſquire

Moſt Reverend and Honoured,

HAving, by Your Appointment, preach'd the following Sermons, and publiſh'd them, by your Command; I humbly deſire, this Dedication of them to You may be accepted as ſome Acknowledgment for that great Truſt you have been pleaſed to honour me with.

I have nothing to ſay for the Performance, but that I have endeavoured, all I could to proportion my Care to the Subject, and Deſign of the Lecture; and, where the Management is faulty, I have

reaſon to hope that the Evidence of the Truths, I defend, will bear me out.

I have taken the Liberty to Print my Sermons all together, in a continu'd Diſcourſe, that the Strength of the Proofs there given may appear more plainly from their Connexion.

If it ſhall pleaſe God to render what I have done, in any degree, or meaſure, ſerviceable towards the raiſing, or promoting a Senſe of Religion among us, I ſhall extreamly rejoyce at my Succeſs; and, I am ſure, I ſhall have my Satisfaction encreaſed by Your Approbation of my Endeavours, and by your farther Protection and Defence of the ſame Cauſe, in which I am now particularly engaged, and which ought to be the general Concern of Mankind.

I am,

Moſt Reverend and Honoured,

Your moſt faithful and obedient Servant,

Francis Gaſtrell.

THE PREFACE.

IN every Age of the World, of which we have any Account left us, the Wickedneſs of Mankind has much the largeſt ſhare in their Hiſtory: and if we intirely credited the Complaints of the ſeveral Hiſtorians, who acquaint us with what paſſed in their days, we ſhould be diſpoſed to conclude, that thoſe particular times, of which they write, were certainly much worſe, than any that went before, and, conſequently that Vice, having been always growing, and gathering Strength, as the World advanced in years, the Preſent Generation of Men muſt far exceed all their Predeceſſors in Wickedneſs. But, tho' I have a very ill Opinion of the Age we now live in, I cannot look upon this Reflexion as juſt, and well-grounded.

The true Occaſion both of the Obſervation, and the Complaints grounded upon it, I take to be, that variety of Wickedneſs, whereby the ſeveral Ages, and Countries of the World have been diſtinguiſh'd from one another. For there have been as many different Metheds,

and Faſhions of ſinning, among Men, as Forms of Government; and as many Changes and Revolutions in Vice, as in Empire. Some Periods of Time have been remarkable for open Cruelty, Rapine, and Oppreſſion; ſome for Treachery, and private Revenge, and all the ſecret ways of Deſtruction; others for Luxury, and Riot, and all manner of extravagant Luſt, and Debauchery; At ſome Seaſons Profaneſs, and a publick contempt of Religion have prevail'd; at other times Indifference, and an utter Neglect of all that's good and ſacred; ſometimes Hypocriſy, and an open pretence to Piety and Virtue have been generally uſed for a Cover to a cloſe and ſecret practice of all ſort of Vice; and ſometimes Men have had the Impudence to defend the worſt Actions, by endeavouring to make them appear conſiſtent with Religion.

Theſe, and many ſuch Differences as theſe are obſervable in the Hiſtory of former times; but the peculiar, diſtinguiſhing Character of This Age, is a publick Denial of Religion, and all the Obligations of it, with an Endeavour, to diſprove the Evidences brought for it, and to offer a more rational Scheme of Libertiniſm. 'Tis true indeed, this ought to be the Plea of all wicked Men who are reſolved to continue in their Vices;

and, upon that account, it may be juſtly wonder'd at, that the number of Atheiſts, and profeſt Libertines has not been much greater in former Ages, than in this, in which we pretend to juſter Views, and ſtronger Proofs of Religion than were heretofore known: But 'tis plain, there never were more than there are now, to whom thoſe Characters do truly belong, whatever ſofter Names they are pleaſed to diſtinguiſh themſelves by; and this I apprehend to be the reaſon of it.

The Scriptures of the new Teſtament, which are, generally, in this part of the World believed to contain the Revelations of God, are ſo plain and particular, ſo full and expreſs, in the Account they give of the Duties required of Men, and of the future Rewards and Puniſhments annexed to the obſervance or breach of them; and the World is ſo inlightned now by the great Improvements of Knowledge which have been lately made, eſpecially by a critical and exact Search into the Deſign, and Meaning of the Sacred Writings, that 'tis impoſſible for Men of Senſe to reconcile a Profligate Life with thoſe Ideas of God and Religion which they meet with in the Scriptures; and therefore they find themſelves obliged, in defence of their Vices, (which they cannot perſwade themſelves to part with,)

with,) to deny, not only Revelation, but all manner of Religion too; ſince, if there be any Religion at all, they are forced to acknowledge that we have the faireſt, and moſt rational Draught of it preſented us in the Writings of the New Teſtament.

This Method of reaſoning is, now, found to have a ſtronger Influence in quieting the Conſcience, and making an ill Man ſatisfied with himſelf, than any Plea formerly uſed; becauſe it has a greater ſhew of Fairneſs and Sincerity in it: 'tis ſo very reaſonable, and honourable a thing for a Man to act up to his Principles, that wicked Men are eaſily diſpoſed to entertain a good Opinion of the Principles of Irreligion, becauſe the conſtant Agreeableneſs of their Practice to them makes their Character conſiſtent, and all of a piece, and gives them a great Advantage both in point of Judgment, and Honour, over thoſe, who pretend to other Principles, and yet act juſt as they do.

But, whatever Preference may be due to theſe Men upon a compariſon of them with wicked Profeſſors of Religion; and whatever Eaſe, and Satisfaction it may afford them, in a continued Courſe of Vice, that their Judgment and Practice agree together; I think it may be made very evident, that

they

they have only found out a new Artifice to deceive themſelves; and that all their Reaſonings are not only vain and groundleſs, but directly oppoſite to the cleareſt Conceptions of Truth, and Happineſs, which Mankind is capable of.

This is the plain Deſign of the following Diſcourſe; and, to render it more effectual for the checking, and putting ſome ſtop to the reigning Corruption of this Age, I have ſo contrived it, as to make it bear with equal Force againſt all the Principles which can be made uſe of, to ſupport Irreligion.

I know very well, that the Folly and Unreaſonableneſs of downright Atheiſm are ſo manifeſt, and the pernicious Conſequences of no Religion-at-all, ſo viſible in themſelves, and have, beſides, been ſo juſtly and largely expoſed already, in many late Diſcourſes, that no body will dare to own the Title or Character of an Atheiſt, *whatever his private Sentiments may be; and therefore, I have endeavoured to give ſuch a Proof of Religion, as will overthrow all the looſe Principles and Objections now commonly made uſe of to evacuate the practical Force and Power of it: all which may properly be rank'd under the Style of* Irreligion, *if they will not be allowed to come under that of* Atheiſm; *which, as far as we are concern'd to know or do any thing*

in the World, I take to be much the ſame thing; as will more fully be made out in the Diſcourſe it ſelf.

The Being of a God *is not, indeed, openly and directly queſtion'd, becauſe the Theory of the Univerſe cannot be ſo eaſily, and conveniently explained, without ſome ſuch Notion, to which the Name of* God *may be given; but, if what ſome Philoſophers vouchſafe to call by the Name of* God *be not an* intelligent Being, *or be not the* Governour of the World, *or do's not* particularly concern himſelf with the Actions of Men; *'tis all one to us, whether there be any ſuch Being as* God *or no: all Hypotheſes concerning the Origin, Duration, and preſent ſtate of the World are then alike, that is, they are all equally fit to entertain our Imaginations, and to help us to be inſenſible of the Tediouſneſs of living: which, if the notions of* God, *hereafter laid down are not true, is all the Buſineſs we have to do here.*

But ſtill it will be urged, that, allowing that Notion of God *which I have given, there are few, if any who can properly be called* Atheiſts, *becauſe the generality at leaſt, of thoſe who are commonly thought to deſerve this Name do profeſs to believe a* God, *of all thoſe Attributes I have aſcribed to him, and to acknowledge*

that

that Men are under ſome Obligations of Religion; but, if we examine all their Principles together, and conſider the neceſſary Conſequences of them, we ſhall find that they are diſtinguiſh'd from Atheiſts, *by Title and Profeſſion only, and not by any real Difference in their Faith: For the Religion of theſe Men is nothing elſe, but a few honeſt Principles relating to Juſtice, Friendſhip, and Society, which are wholly owing to their Complexion, or Education, and not to their Belief of a God; and the practical Influence even of Theſe commonly reaches no farther, than that particular Set of Men, in whoſe Company or Intereſts they are moſt ingaged, and is intirely bounded and regulated by their preſent Eaſe, Advantage, or Reputation, and not by any Future Proſpects in another Life; and thoſe of them who ſeem to admit a* future State, *when they come to explain themſelves, make it ſuch a one as Men need have very little regard for in* This.

Theſe are all the Principles which the generality of thoſe who have lately inſulted the Chriſtian Faith do really believe, and act upon; this is the ſum both of their Faith, and Practice, however they are pleaſed to magnify the Excellence and Perfection of natural Religion, *and whatever regard they*

they pretend to have for the clear and eaſie parts of the Chriſtian Revelation.

By Religion, *therefore, I would here be underſtood to mean that whole Scheme of Humane Duties, we find delivered in the Writings of the New Teſtament, as recommended and inforced by ſuch a Future State as is there deſcribed; which may properly be call'd, with reſpect to the Author of it,* Chriſtian Morality. *'Tis in this Senſe and Extent of the Word that I have endeavoured to eſtabliſh the* Certainty *and* Neceſſity *of* Religion; *and 'tis plain, that the Arguments, made uſe of for this purpoſe, will fit no other Scheme but this, there being no other Draught, or Model of Life to be conceived, that would be capable of producing ſuch a noble Scene of Happineſs, as I have ſhewn, would be the certain effect of an univerſal Practice of the Chriſtian Morality.*

I have not deſcended to a particular Defence of ſeveral Duties, commonly inſiſted upon as Principles of natural Religion, the Reaſonableneſs, and natural Obligation of which is queſtioned by ſome who are willing to lye under as few Reſtraints as they can; this, I ſay, is not done, both becauſe it was neceſſary to give a general Idea of Religion firſt, and a particular

cular Examination of the ſeveral Parts of it, was too long a Task to come within that compaſs of Writing which I was confined to; And becauſe I am fully ſatisfied, that it is a ſhorter and better way of reaſoning to prove the Truth of the Chriſtian Revelation, *which being throughly proved, it will follow, that we are to ſubmit entirely to the Authority of it, and to regulate all our falſe and imperfect Views of Religion by that moſt perfect Plan which God himſelf has given of it in the Scriptures.*

'Tis for the ſame Reaſon that I have made no particular inquiries into the Condition, *and* Duration *of our* Future State, *and the* Nature *of thoſe* Rewards *and* Puniſhments *which we are to expect hereafter, nor have offered at any explication of the ſeveral Difficulties which occur in the Doctrine of* Divine Providence; *becauſe a full and Satisfactory Account of theſe things can be had no other way than from Revelation; and in general, 'tis a ſufficient Anſwer to all the Objections which may be raiſed from hence, that* there is a God; *that* there are Marks and Tokens of Wiſdom, in the whole Oeconomy, and Courſe of the World; *that* Man is made and deſigned for Religion, here, while he lives, and for a future State, after Death.

If

If any of these Principles hold, they all hold; and no particular Difficulties which do not evidently overthrow the whole Scheme, can have any force at all. If there be no future State, there's no Religion; if there be no such thing as Religion, there is no such thing as Wisdom, or Design in the Frame and Constitution of Man; and if the Appearances of Wisdom here have no Reality under them, we shall have more reason to distrust all the Signs and Tokens of it, which any other Parts of Nature can afford us, and consequently, we can have no proof of such a wise and intelligent Being as God. In this Process of Reasoning, we argue upon a full and comprehensive Knowledge of the Principles we argue from, because, if there be no future Life after this, we know the utmost that can be known of the State and Condition of Man: But the seeming Inequalities of Providence, in the Conduct of the Universe, can be no Argument against any of the Principles before advanced; because, while we have certain Tokens of Wisdom remaining, no doubtful Appearances of the contrary will be sufficient to overthrow them: and all those must needs be so, where we cannot carry our Observations to the farthest end of things, in all the different Points of distance from us; which is the present Case.

For except we were able to take a full and exact View of the whole Universe, and all the Relations which the several parts of it bear to one another, 'tis impossible for us to know, that such or such a thing was ill contrived in it; If we are not sure that there is no such thing as a future State, we cannot condemn the present Course of Humane Affairs as unequal, or fortuitous; and unless we were throughly acquainted with all the Circumstances of our Condition in another World, the just Proportion of future Rewards and Punishments to the Actions of this Life, and the exact Manner and Methods of God's dealing with us hereafter, we can never make it appear from Reason, that the Scripture-Account of God's future Appointments for us is contrary to the Rules of Justice or Wisdom, and consequently that our Expectation of a future State is vain, since the most probable Representation we can have of it, which is that we find in the New-Testament, is ill-grounded.

If, therefore, the General Proof of Religion hereafter given *stand good, no particular Difficulties either in the real Phœnomena of Nature, or in the arbitrary Schemes and Hypotheses of Men ought to have any weight with us. The next and the only thing*

which

which remains to be done by us, is, that we ſhould ſearch and examine into the Scriptures, and being convinc'd of their Truth, ſhould ſincerely endeavour to form both our Opinions and Practice upon that moſt perfect Model of Religion which is there laid down.

By the ſame Author.

THE Certainty of the Chriſtian Revelation, and the Neceſſity of believing it, Eſtabliſhed; in oppoſition to all the Cavils and Inſinuations of ſuch as pretend to allow Natural Religion, and reject the Goſpel.

Some Conſiderations concerning the Trinity, and the ways of managing that Controverſie, The Second Edition, together with a Defence of them againſt the Objections of the Dean of St. *Pauls*.

THE *Certainty* and *Neceſſity* OF RELIGION In General, &c.

HEB. xi. 6.

He that cometh to God muſt believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.

REligion has been ſo long in Poſſeſſion, ſo powerful hath been its Influence, and ſo univerſal its Authority, ſo nearly is Mankind concern'd in all it promiſes, or threatens, and ſuch mighty Conſequences attend

the Truth, or Falſhood of its Pretenſions, that I have often wonder'd, how the Men of theſe latter days, who are at ſuch a diſtance from the firſt Riſe of things, durſt diſpute a Title ſo well owned and atteſted; the Denial of which is ſo dangerous, and which, if it had at firſt been falſe, they have no poſſible means left of diſproving: whereas, on the contrary, the Evidences of its Truth are ſtill in being, ſtill freſh, and in all their ſtrength of Conviction: as I hope in ſome meaſure to make good in the following Diſcourſe.

I am very ſenſible that I engage in a Subject, which ſeveral great and learned Men have already, and ſome of them very lately, treated of, with the wiſeſt Reflections, and juſteſt Reaſoning imaginable. But, beſides that Truth it ſelf is fruitful, and a Subject of this nature is hardly ever to be exhauſted; the ſame Object may admit of different Views; there may be new, and more ſuitable ways of offering the ſame things to the Underſtanding; or old Arguments may be ſtrengthen'd and fenc'd in from the Objections which have been formerly rais'd againſt them, by ſome additional Supports: or, ſhould there be nothing of all this in what I have to ſay, yet

I think I am juſtifyable in repeating the ſame things once more, to the Shame and Confuſion of thoſe, who have hitherto been unable to anſwer them, and yet continue in their Sins and Unbelief.

But ſince it is not ſo much Their Conviction, (which nothing, I fear, but unpromis'd, irreſiſtible Grace can effect) as the ſecuring and confirming Others in the Truth that I chiefly aim at; ſince the encreaſing and propagating a true Senſe of Religion among Men, is my principal Deſign, and not a learned Triumph over an Adverſary, I have ordered my Method accordingly, and conſequently have made Choice of ſuch a one as in the general Management of it is different, tho', in ſeveral of its parts, it will be found to fall in with that of others.

The *Certainty* and *Neceſſity of Religion*, is, what I undertake to prove, and therefore I ſhall conſider Religion in the full Latitude and Extent of the Notion, as it takes in all thoſe Obligations which reſult from the *Nature of Man*, the *Being* and *Attributes* of God, and the *Relation* in which the *one* ſtands to the *other*. In the proſecuting of which Subject, I ſhall

chiefly make Choice of ſuch Arguments, as, being taken from what we know, of our ſelves, and of ſuch Objects without us, as we are beſt acquainted with, are moſt eaſily perceived by us, and entertain'd with the leaſt Reſiſtance or Suſpicion.

All nice and philoſophical Reaſonings I ſhall forbear, as much as I can; but, where the Nature of the Subject, or the particular Prejudices of the Perſons to be ſatisfied require a more ſpeculative and metaphyſical Account of things, I ſhall chuſe out ſuch Arguments of this kind, as the Underſtanding may with the leaſt difficulty comprehend, and ſhall but lightly mention ſuch, which, tho' convincing to ſome, who are already well uſed to Speculation, may chance to be ſuſpected, by others, of too much Fineneſs, and ſo will probably, tho' very unjuſtly, create in them a Diſguſt to all the reſt. And I ſhall all along take a due care to diſtinguiſh between ſuch Notions and Opinions as are abſolutely neceſſary to the *Being of Religion*, and thoſe others, which, tho' oftentimes uſed in the Defence of it, and earneſtly contended for, are of that nature, that Religion would no ways ſuffer, if they ſhould prove to be falſe.

Now,

Now, in order to purſue my intended Method, with the more Clearneſs, I think my ſelf obliged in this place to give an account of what I mean by *Religion*; a right Notion of which being firſt laid down, it will afterwards be eaſier to judge, whether there be any ſuch thing; and if there be, whether it be reaſonable and neceſſary, that Mankind ſhould be influenced by it.

By Religion then, in general, I mean all that *Worſhip*, *Service*, or *Obedience*, which we, who call our ſelves *Men*, ought to pay to *God*; or whatever we are, in any reſpect, *obliged* to upon the Proſpect of his Favour, or under the Penalty of his Diſpleaſure, in *this* or a *future State*.

From whence 'tis plain, that, in order to make it appear, that there is ſuch a thing as Religion, we muſt prove that there is a *God*, or ſome ſuperior Being, who can, and does *oblige Man* to live after ſuch a particular manner; and that *Man* is capable of, and actually under ſuch an *Obligation*; the Performance, or Neglect of which, will be attended with very different Conſequences, and thoſe, ſufficient to determine him to act one way, rather than another.

But if a Man were deſirous of convincing ſuch Perſons as denied all this, where ſhould he firſt ſet out in his Proof? What Order ſhould he give his Thoughts? Whence muſt he take his Riſe to prove original Foundation-Truths? What Evidence will be powerful enough to prevail upon thoſe, who love a Lye, and hate to be reform'd; How are they to be attempted who are ſtrongly fortified with their Prejudices, and have hardly left a Man, who would attack them, any Ground to ſtand upon? Such an unreaſonable Defiance of the common Senſe of Mankind, is juſtly thought by the Wiſeſt Men, to deſerve Puniſhment, rather than Confutation. However, ſince thoſe, who are yet innocent, or indifferent, may be corrupted; and thoſe who are juſt entring upon the ways of Irreligion may be farther advanc'd and confirm'd in them by more ſettled *Atheiſts*, the ſame Care is to be taken for the Security of the former, as ſhould be applied to the Conviction of the latter, were they judged capable of being convinc'd; and therefore, the Method to be uſed upon this Occaſion muſt be ſuch, as will moſt ſurely deſtroy the Pretences of *Atheiſm*, as well as give the eaſieſt Account,

count, and moſt undeniable Proof of *Religion*; that ſo the Arguments, made uſe of by the Perverters of Mankind, may loſe all their Power and Force upon others, by loſing the Advantage of coming unanſwer'd.

In order, therefore, to ſatisfy thoſe who have not quite renounc'd their Reaſon of the Truth of Religion, according as I have before deſcribed and ſtated it; and of the Falſhood of thoſe Grounds upon which it is oppoſed, I ſhall proceed, in this manner.

Firſt, I ſhall give ſome Account of the *Nature of Man*, the *Nature of God*, and that *Relation* which there is between them; ſo far as is neceſſary to eſtabliſh the Notion of *Religion*.

Secondly, I ſhall prove that there *is a God*, or a Being of ſuch a Nature as is before ſuppoſed.

Thirdly, From the Knowledge which, under the former Heads, it will appear, that we have, or are capable of having, concerning the *Humane* and *Divine Na-*

tures, I ſhall deduce a poſitive and direct Proof of *Religion*.

Fourthly, I ſhall farther evince the Truth of *Religion*, from a *Compariſon* of it with *Irreligion*, and the neceſſary Conſequences ariſing from thence.

Fifthly, I ſhall conſider the *Grounds* and *Pretences* of *Irreligion*; what can be offered in Defence of it, and what are the uſual Pleas for it; and from thence ſhew the Abſurdity and Folly of their Conduct who have no better Reaſons for what they Believe, and Do, than thoſe, which they allege, upon Examination, will be found to be.

Sixthly, I ſhall make ſome Enquiries into the *Cauſes* of *Atheiſm* and *Irreligion*, or the Reaſons which induce Men to take up ſuch Opinions.

And ſhall conclude with a ſhort Explication of the different Notions of *Atheiſm* and *Deiſm*.

I. *Firſt*

I. *First* then, I am to give ſome Account of the *Nature of Man*, the *Nature of God*, and the *Relation* which is between them, ſo far as is neceſſary to eſtabliſh the Notion of *Religion*.

The Knowledge of *Religion*, as of all other Things whatſoever, muſt begin from the Conſideration of our Selves. Now our *Exiſtence* being granted, the ſame Conſciouſneſs which ſatisfies us of this, if we carefully attend to what paſſes within us, will farther inform us, that we are capable of *Thinking*, *Perceiving*, and *Knowing*; which Capacity is uſually ſtiled *Underſtanding*: And that we have likewiſe a Power of *Acting*, or *not Acting*; that is, we can entertain a *Thought*, or diſmiſs it; cauſe a *Motion*, or hinder it, when we have ſo *determin'd* with our ſelves, and that barely *by determining* ſo to do; which general Power, as it relates, both to *thinking* and *moving*, is called the *Will*.

'Tis plain alſo from the ſame Experience, that we are capable of *Pleaſure* and *Pain*: by which I mean all manner of *agreeable* and *diſagreeable* Sentiments whatever, whether cauſed by our ſelves, or occaſioned by any thing without us.

And

And upon farther reflection we may find, that *Pleaſure* and *Pain*, of ſome ſort or other, are the firſt, and only Springs of *Action*, which ſet all our Powers on work, and give Riſe to all our Determinations; (The obtaining the one, and avoiding the other, being the continual imployment of the Soul.)

But the particular *Reaſon*, *Motive*, or *End* of any Action being always ſomething *future*, and the Views and Proſpects we act upon being commonly remote, we are farther convinced, that we may, and often do act fooliſhly, and to our own Prejudice, either by leſſening or diſcontinuing our preſent Satisfaction, or by bringing more Pain and Trouble upon our ſelves, than what we already feel; and that the only cauſe of this, is, the different repreſentation of things *future*, from what they are perceiv'd to be when *preſent*, both in themſelves and in their Conſequences. From whence we infer, that there is no other way of remedying this Evil, and preventing our being acceſſory to our own Miſery, but by rectifying our Notions of ſuch things, as, being future, do not, by immediate Impreſſions, aſſure us, that they really are, what to us they appear to be.

Now

Now as to the *Knowledge* we are capable of in this kind, we are to conſider, what every Man may be ſenſible of that will reflect, *viz.* That there are ſome things, which appear with ſuch a Light and Clearneſs to our underſtandings, that we cannot poſſibly deny our Aſſent to them: That in many Caſes, there is not Evidence enough to command our Aſſent, but ſo much only, as inclines us to give it one way, rather than another; and this in different degrees. That ſometimes we are held in ſuſpence, by equal motives of Credibility, ſo that we find it difficult to determine our ſelves either way: And that many things there are, whereof we have no manner of Notions at all, and ſo can determine nothing concerning them.

And here 'tis farther to be obſerved, that what is in its own Nature certain, may appear doubtful to us at one time, and probable at another; and what we Aſſent to as probable now, may afterwards command our Aſſent as certain: And that in ſuch matters, where we cannot certainly determine what is True or Falſe, we may oftentimes be ſure, that we

we know as much as can be known of them, by the Strength of our preſent Faculties.

But, beſides theſe general differences in the appearance of things to us, with reſpect to *Truth* or *Falſhood*, as *Certain*, *Probable*, *Doubtful*, or *Exceeding our preſent reach*; We are moreover to take notice of another difference in the appearance of things to us, with reſpect to *Action*, and the conſequences of it, *Happineſs* or *Miſery*. For, it often ſo happens, that, where the *Truth* of a thing ſeems doubtful to us, it plainly appears to be *ſafer*, and more to our Preſent Advantage, or affords a better proſpect of Future Happineſs, to Act one way, than another. And abundance of Inſtances there are, in which, we find our ſelves under a *neceſſity* of *Acting* one way, or other, where neither ſide appears certainly *true*, and there the conſiderations of *Safety* and *Danger* muſt determine us.

But after all, when we *know* as much as we can, we find that we are not *Equally diſpoſed* to cloſe with whatever is offered to our *Choice*; but that ſometimes we are under a *neceſſity* of *preferring* one thing, and *rejecting* another; And, when it is in our *Power* to *determine* our ſelves either

either way, we cannot always *do* what we *will*, either for want of *Knowledge* and *Strength* to effect what we desire, or because we are Forced and Overruled, by some *Extrinsick Violence*, to Act contrary to what we would, and could have done, if we had not been under that *Force*.

This is all the Account of Humane Nature, which I thought necessary to my present Design of establishing the Truth of Religion: And I perswade my self, I have said nothing upon this Subject, which any Man, who fairly consults himself, can possibly call in question.

All Questions concerning the *Origine*, and *Substance* of the *Soul*, its *Union* with the *Body*, and *separate Existence*, I have purposely waved; as things which do, in a great measure, ly out of the Reach of *natural Reason*, and, consequently, admit of no *certain* Proof from *thence*; are, as commonly handled, involved in great Ambiguity of Terms, and, which way soever explain'd, I think, as far as I have hitherto seen, make no manner of change, either as to the *Truth*, or *Nature* of Religion.

Whether the Soul be *infused*, or *derived*, *material*, or *immaterial*; whether it *depends* upon the *Body*, in all its Actions, or some-

ſometimes *acts of it ſelf*; is *diſſolved with* it, or *exiſts after it*; if, what I have ſaid before concerning our own Experience, be true, it will be found, that Religion has a very good bottom to ſtand upon, whichſoever of theſe Opinions be admitted. But, if the Soul came from *without* the *Body*, is of a *different Nature* from it, can *Act independently of it*, and *Exiſt after* its Diſſolution, as is extreamly *probable* from *Reaſon*, and very *certain from Revelation*; then here are ſo many additional Arguments, for the Truth of what may be ſufficiently prov'd, without 'em, from plainer and more undeniable Principles; as I ſhall endeavour to make good in the following Diſcourſe.

The next Thing I am to do, is to conſider the *Nature of God*, or, what that Notion, or Idea is, to which I affix that Name: which in ſhort is this; An *Eternal* Being, of all *poſſible Perfections* in himſelf, and from whom every thing elſe deriv'd its Being, and whatever belongs to it.

But, to give a more particular Account of my Thoughts in this Matter: I conceive God to be *One unchangeable* Being; of an *intelligent* Nature; who *always neceſſarily Ex-*

Exiſted of himſelf; who Knows every thing that can be known; and can Do every thing that is poſſible to be done; who does every thing that he Wills, and nothing but what he Wills himſelf; who enjoys an unalterable State of the greateſt Happineſs that can be enjoy'd; who never Wills, or Does any thing inconſiſtent with this State; who makes *himſelf* the ultimate end of all he does; and next, to that, the Good, or *Happineſs* of all *ſuch Beings*, as are capable of it; which, together with all other Beings, and every thing that belongs to them, had their Original from him, and depend upon him for their Continuance; and, laſtly, who brings about whatever he Wills, or Deſigns by the fitteſt and moſt proper Means.

This ſeems to me to be the eaſieſt Notion of God that we are capable of conceiving: and, if it can be proved, that there really is ſuch a Being as is here deſcrib'd, I think 'tis all that's neceſſary upon this Subject, with reſpect to what I have undertaken.

For, whether we repreſent God to our Thoughts as a *pure and ſimple act*, a *ſpiritual Subſtance*, or *ſubtle Matter*; as the *whole maſs*, or *Subſtance of the World*, taken all to-

together, or as the *Soul* and *active Principle of it*; as *confin'd to the Heavens*, or *diffuſed through the whole extent of Being*; as the *Maker* and *Creator* of all things, or as the *Principle* and *Fountain* from whence they flowed; or whether we conſider him under any other Idea that our Reaſon, or Imagination can frame; if we allow all the Characters of a Deity before mentioned, 'tis the ſame thing, as to Religion, which ſoever of theſe Opinions we embrace; as will hereafter appear. But, if any of them are urged to overthrow that Notion of a Deity which I have given; the Proof of ſuch a Being, to which that Notion belongs, will be a full and ſufficient Anſwer to them.

Now, as to the *Relation* which is between *God* and *Man*, we thus conceive; That God is our *Creator*, and *Parent*, the *Author* of our Being and Nature, and of all the Powers and Capacities belonging to it; and that we are his *Creatures*, the *Iſſue* of his Power, and the *Workmanſhip* of his Hands; that God is our *Protector*, *Governour*, and *Maſter*, and that we are his *Dependents*, *Subjects*, and *Servants*; that God is our *Benefactor* and the Author of all our Happi-

Happineſs, and we *obliged* and *indebted* o him for whatever we enjoy. All which Relations do neceſſarily reſult from the Natures of the Beings related; as will plainly appear, upon a juſt Compariſon of them together; and will be farther manifeſted, when we enter upon the particular Proofs of Religion.

Suppoſing therefore that I have given a true Account of the *Nature of Man*, (which being taken from Experience, can admit of no other Proof, nor of any greater Certainty:) the only thing remaining to be done, before I come to the main Argument I propos'd, is, to prove,

II. That *there is a God*, or a Being of ſuch a Nature as I have endeavour'd to repreſent; which is the ſecond Thing I undertook.

In diſcourſing on which Subject, that I may expreſs my Thoughts with the more Clearneſs, give every Argument its due weight, and everywhere proportion my Building to my Foundation; I ſhall conſider the Being of God under the different Degrees of *Poſſible*, *Probable*, and *Certain*.

Firſt then, As to the *Poſſibility* of ſuch a Being; I cannot imagine any Man of ſuch an irregular Make of Underſtanding, as to apprehend that Deſcription I have given of a Deity to be *abſurd*, and *chimerical*, or to have any *Inconſiſtency*, or *Contradiction* in it. I am ſure I have ſaid nothing but what I very well conceive my ſelf; and what I think, is as eaſily conceivable by any Body elſe; and I have uſed the plaineſt and moſt intelligible Expreſſions, I could, upon this Occaſion.

But farther to aſſiſt the Weakneſs of our Underſtandings, in framing a more diſtinct Conception of God, we will conſider the ſeveral Idea's, of which this complex Notion is made, and ſee whether they will not ſuit very well together.

Now, 'tis plain to any Man who reflects upon the Ideas which are lodged in his Mind, that he has a Notion of *Time* and of the ſeveral *Periods* of it, which he can place at what diſtance he pleaſes to meaſure the *Duration* of any thing by them, but never, at ſuch a diſtance, by all the Addition his Imagination is capable of, but that he can ſtill ſuppoſe ſome Being to exiſt, both *before*, and *after*; and the Being

ing, before and after which he cannot conceive any Time, or other Being, he calls *Eternal.*

In like manner, when we conſider the *Variety of Beings* in the World, we are not able to imagine, or ſuppoſe ſuch a number of any of them, as that there cannot ſtill be a greater: and this *poſſible Variety* of Things, never to be exhauſted, is ſtiled *Infinite.* And if we can conceive ſuch an *Infinity* of *Things poſſible*, we can conceive alſo a *Power* proportionable which can produce whatever we ſuppoſe poſſible to be produced, and a *Knowledge* anſwerable to it, which takes in whatever can be known; and *that* is, whatever can *be.*

Thus it is that we conceive an *eternal, intelligent* Being, of *infinite Knowledge* and *Power.*

And this we do very eaſily, without ſuch Intenſneſs of Thought, and *nicety of Abſtraction*, as may be imagined neceſſary on this Occaſion: for we find *Infinity* almoſt in every Thing; All our Studies, and Enquiries, lead us to this Notion.

As for inſtance: When we conſider the *Dimenſions* of *Matter*, we leſſen, and magnify them, till we are loſt either way:

and ſtill we find our ſelves as far from any Bounds as when we firſt ſet out upon the Search.

In like manner, when we turn our thoughts to obſerve the *Various kinds of Natural Bodies* in the World, the farther we advance our Inquiries, the more ſtill do the *Species* or *Sorts* Multiply upon us; and the poſſible variety of more does proportionably increaſe, till, confounded with the growing proſpect, we are content to admire, what, invain, we tried to Reach.

'Tis the ſame thing if we contract our View, and keep within the compaſs of *one Kind* or *Diviſion* of Bodies only as *Plants*, *Minerals*, and the like, the more differences we perceive in them, the more we comprehend poſſible, every new *Mode*, *Quality*, or *Relation*, that we take notice of affording an inconceiveable variety of Combinations with thoſe obſerved before.

'Tis thus, alſo, in the *intellectual Nature*. The *different Degrees* of *Knowledge*, *Power*, and *Happineſs*, which we are conſcious of, do ſufficiently aſſure us, that we are capable of greater, and greater ſtill; and, whatever Notion we can frame

frame of our own State, with reſpect to any of theſe Qualifications; from the utmoſt top of what we are arrived to, we can look farther ſtill, and conceive higher Advancements of each kind poſſible, either in our ſelves, or in other Men, or at leaſt in other Beings of larger Capacities; and this, in a continual Riſe, without any thing to *terminate* our View.

From whence we are farther enabled to conceive, that God is *infinitely happy*, as well as *infinitely Knowing* and *Powerful*; that is, that he enjoys all the Happineſs which can poſſibly be enjoyed by any Capacity of being.

Having got thus far into the Notion of a *Deity*, I think, we may with leſs Difficulty conceive, that ſuch a Being as this did *neceſſarily exiſt of himſelf*; that is, that an *eternal Being* had nothing *before* it, to be the *Cauſe* or *Author* of its *Exiſtence*; And farther, that he is *unchangeable*, or *always the ſame*; that is, that an *eternal* Being *always is*; and a Being of *infinite Knowledge*, *Power*, and *Happineſs*, is *always alike*, *Knowing*, *Powerful*, and *Happy*.

The *actual Production of all things*, which are not God, *by him*, and their *Dependance upon* him for their Continuance,

and all other Circumſtances of their being, are not Things hard to be conceived by thoſe who acknowledge that he can do all things poſſible; and he who knows every thing, that can be known, may as eaſily be ſuppoſed to effect whatever he deſigns, by the fitteſt and moſt proper means; and that is, to be *infinitely Wiſe*.

And what other *Reaſon*, or *Motive* can we Imagine that an intelligent Being, of infinite Happineſs, ſhould *act* upon, but *his own free Pleaſure*? and who can hinder the Almighty from doing what *he will*; But that the *Happineſs* of all ſuch Beings, as are capable of it, ſo far as it is conſiſtent with the *Wiſdom of God* to grant them the Enjoyment, ſhould be very agreeable to his *Good Will* and Pleaſure, we are not, I believe, diſpoſed to doubt.

And this compleats the Account of the *Nature* of *God* which I gave before in ſhort, and have now examined over again, more particularly.

From all which, I think, it may ſafely be concluded, that the *Idea*, we have form'd of a *God*, is no *Chimera*, or *extravagant work of the Imagination*, but a very *poſſible conſiſtent Notion*; and that thoſe, who

who affirm that there is ſome ſuch *Being*, to which this *Idea* belongs, cannot be cenſured for vain incoherent Thinkers, who have put things together without any Ground, or Warrant from Reaſon.

How far the *bare Conception* of ſuch an *Idea*, as that, which we have framed of God, or the *meer Poſſibility* of ſuch a Being, does, without the Aſſiſtance of other Principles, prove the *Reality* of his *Exiſtence*, I ſhall not here examine. The Arguments drawn from hence, tho' in themſelves, perhaps *certain*, to ſeveral Perſons *convincing*, and not to be *diſproved* by any, do not fit every Underſtanding; nor have that regular uniform Face of Truth, which takes at firſt ſight, as well as pleaſes after farther Examination: only thus much I ſhall alledge, in their Defence, that the greateſt, and commoneſt Objection, made againſt this kind of Proof, is very ill grounded.

It is not true indeed that *whatever* is *poſſible*, or whatever we have any *Idea* of, for that Reaſon *actually* is; and therefore 'tis urged, that the *actual Exiſtence* of a God does by no means follow from the *Poſſibility* or *Conception* of ſuch a Being: But then it is anſwered that the Conclu-

ſion may and does hold in this Caſe, and in no other whatſoever. Becauſe *Conception* ſuppoſes *Poſſibility*, and *Poſſibility* a *Correſpondent Power*; and a *Power of Exiſting*, when applied to ſuch a Being as God, muſt neceſſarily infer *Actual Exiſtence*; but the unuſual Niceneſs of ſuch a Proof as this being likely to raiſe ſome Prejudice againſt it, I ſhall wave the Proſecution of it; and, to cut off all Colour of Advantage from ſuch as are diſpoſed to cavil, I ſhall content my ſelf at preſent with having ſhewn that 'tis *very* poſſible and *conceiveable*, that there *may be* a *God*; and paſs on to the next Enquiry I am to make, whether it be not *very probable* that there *is* one.

A *common* Argument for the Being of a God, (and 'tis never the worſe for being common) is the *general Concurrence* and *Agreement of Mankind* in the Acknowledgment of this great Truth. We will conſider the Argument it ſelf, in its full Strength, and then ſee, what fairly follows from it.

The Sum of what may be ſaid upon the firſt, is this: That all Accounts and Relations of the *preſent* State of the World, and all

all the Hiſtories of *paſt* Ages which are now extant do agree in aſſuring us, that, ſince the firſt Memory of Things was preſerved, till now, there was no period of Time, nor any Nation under the Sun, in which the Being of a God was not acknowledg'd and believed by a *vaſt Generality* of all who were *then* and *there* living.

And farther, that not only the greateſt part of *Mankind*, taken in groſs, and the greateſt part of every *Nation*, conſidered as a diſtinct Society of Men, were of this Belief, but the greateſt part of every *Sect* or *Diviſion*, as they ſtand diſtinguiſh'd by their different *Opinions* in other things; their different *Capacities*; *Intereſts*; *Ways*, and *Manners of Thinking*; as, the *Learned* and *Ignorant*; thoſe who had examined the Point, and conſider'd the Reaſons for and againſt it, and thoſe who had it only propoſed to them, without any proof either way, but what was immediately offer'd from the nature of the thing; the *Mahometan*, and *Idolater*, who add abſurd things to the Nature of God, as well as the *Jew*, and *Chriſtian*, who think more conſiſtently of him; thoſe who hold the *World to be Eternal*, or made by *Chance*, as well as thoſe who look upon it as the

Effect

Effect of Wiſdom; thoſe who explain the Works of Nature by *Mechanical Powers*, and thoſe who in their Account of the Syſtem of things make uſe of *Intelligences*, and *Abſtracted Notions*: not only the *Religious* and *Superſtitious*, and ſuch as expect that any good or ill Conſequences ſhould attend their Belief of a God, but thoſe, whoſe other Opinions declare that they have nothing at all, or very little, to hope or fear from a God, as the *Epicurean*, the *Sadducee*, the *Hobbiſt*, and the *Deiſt*: and laſtly, all ſorts of *wicked Men*, who are uneaſie under the Thoughts of a God, and endeavour to ſhake them off.

Thoſe few who in different Ages of the World, have oppoſed the common Belief, have had no Followers; and ſeveral of them, at the Seaſons of greateſt Seriouſneſs and Recollection, have renounc'd the Opinions which they maintain'd at looſer hours: ſo *univerſally* has the Opinion of a God obtained among Men!

From whence I think thus much at leaſt may be fairly inferr'd, That ſuch a Perſwaſion, as this, is very *ſuitable* to the *Underſtanding*, and *agrees* very well with all the *Principles of our Knowledge*: and, therefore, tho' it could not be *certainly* proved

proved to *follow* from thoſe *evident Perceptions* that we have of *other Truths*; yet, being readily entertained by our Reaſon, without any Oppoſition from them, it muſt, upon this Account only, be *extreamly probable*, and worthy of belief.

For ſuppoſe it to be an *Error*; what can we aſſign for the *Cauſe* of ſuch an *univerſal Error*?

'Tis poſſible indeed, that the *Generality of Mankind* may be *deceiv*'d in a Judgment founded upon the Reports of *Senſe*, or *Imagination*; they may believe that the Sun is very near of the ſame bulk in which it appears to the Eye, when 'tis many times bigger than the Earth; or that it moves, when it ſtands ſtill; or, if they do not believe Wrong, in either of theſe Points, there may be ſomething elſe of ſuch a Nature ſuppoſed, in which all Mankind may be miſtaken; as moſt of the Learned think that the reſt of the World are, in both theſe Judgments. But the *Notion of a God*, is Matter of *pure Thought*, and *Reaſon*, in the Conception of which *Senſe*, and *Imagination* have no ſhare: and therefore, it can never owe its Original to *them*.

There

There is nothing in the *Idea* of God, as I have endeavoured to deſcribe it, which falls under the cognizance of our *Senſes*; nor is any Man conſcious to himſelf, that he has perceived God at any time *this way*. For which reaſon, the *ſenſible* repreſentations that are made of the *Deity* may occaſion a great variety of Errors concerning him; but it cannot be inferr'd from hence, that thoſe Notions and Opinions of a God, which are purely *intellectual*, and in which all Men agree, proceed from the ſame Fountain as theſe additional Errors do, in which they differ very much, and conſequently that thoſe may be, in their own nature, as falſe as theſe, tho' they are not yet diſcovered to be ſo. This I ſay, will by no means follow, becauſe the difference of the repreſentation, in this latter caſe, proves an incapacity in the *Faculty*, to perceive the objects about which it is employed; whereas in the other ſuppoſition, where all Men conſtantly think alike, concerning Objects not perceivable by *Senſe*, 'tis a certain ſign that their *Ideas* are *ſuitable and proportionate* to the *Faculty* which perceives them; and therefore, 'tis very probable alſo, that they are truly ſorted, and put together. Where-

Where-ever there is a *general Agreement* in the *Perception*, there is certainly an *Uniformity* in the *Appearance*; which is as neceſſary to make an *univerſal Error*, as an *univerſal Truth*; and, therefore, ſuppoſing all Men miſtaken, about the *Bulk*, or *Motion* of the Sun, it neceſſarily follows from hence, that, whatever *appears* to the *Senſe*, in this Caſe, *appears* the *ſame* to *all* Men: But then we need not have made any Judgment at all concerning theſe *Appearances*, offered to our *Senſe*; becauſe ſeveral Requiſites to a *juſt Senſation* are wanting, without which, we know, that we are incapable of judging with Aſſurance; and tho' we are deceiv'd for the preſent, by judging too haſtily; our Opinions concerning theſe things may be afterwards altered, and corrected by *Reaſon*; which, being a Faculty ſuperior to *Senſe*, may preſerve us from the Illuſions of it.

But when all Men agree in Matters of *pure Reflexion* and *Reaſon*, we have all the Aſſurance which we can have, that they are in the *right*. Becauſe, in this Caſe, we are certain, not only that the *Appearance* is *uniform*, but that the *Faculty* is employed about its *proper Object*. And

if,

if, the Underſtanding ſhould be deceived in ſuch things as fall within its own immediate cognizance; there is no *higher Faculty* to correct the Miſtake: How, then, can we imagine the Minds of Men to be ſo diſpoſed as to be under a *Neceſſity* of *being deceiv'd?* which they muſt be, if a *conſtant univerſal Appearance of Truth* ſhould be only the Veil of *Falſhood.*

But here, perhaps, it may be ſaid, that where the *Evidence* is not ſo ſtrong as to *command* our *Aſſent*, *Error* may carry the Face of *Truth*, tho' we have not yet been able to diſcover the Cheat; and therefore, 'tis our own Fault if we are deceived in *this* inſtance, as well as in thoſe of *Senſe*, ſince we are not under a *neceſſity* of giving our Judgments accord to the *Appearance.* To which I anſwer, that, allowing a *bare Poſſibility* of *Erring*, in the preſent Caſe, all that I deſign'd to prove from this Argument of *General Conſent* holds good ſtill; which is, that, becauſe all People have agreed to acknowledge a God, 'tis therefore *very probable* that there is one, and *very agreeable* to the *Reaſon of Mankind* to believe there is: ſo that, altho' a Man is not from hence *fully convinc'd* of the *Certainty* of it, he *cannot help*

help believing that it is a *very reaſonable* Opinion, and that there's *very great likelihood* of its being built upon *ſure Foundations*, tho' he has not yet ſearch'd ſo far as to diſcover them. For he cannot give an Account, how all Men ſhould come to be miſtaken in a *matter of this Nature*; and, if they were, how they could ever be undeceived; which may be done, in all the Inſtances of *Senſe*, or *Imagination*, in which any *Error* can be judg'd *poſſible*.

All that can be farther ſuppoſed to countenance a Suſpicion, is, that, poſſibly, there was a time when Men believed *otherwiſe*; but, ſome People having ſtarted ſuch an Opinion, and dreſt it up very plauſibly, it took mightily in the World, and ſo was handed down from one to another, and, in ſucceeding Generations, ſpread and prevail'd, 'till it became *univerſal*. But there is no manner of ground for ſuch a *Suppoſition*.

1. Becauſe, let us look as far back as we can, there are no *Marks* or *Footſteps* to be found of the *Riſe* and *Original* of this Opinion, no *gradual Propagation* of it diſcoverable, it being, in *every Age*, that we have any account of, as *univerſally* believed, as it is *now*.

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2. Becauſe no *parallel Inſtance* can be aſſigned, which might give any colour for a ſuſpicion in *this*; no Perſwaſion of the like nature, having ever been detected to be an *Error*, after ſo long, and ſo wide an Eſtabliſhment.

I do not know of any Opinion whatſoever which *actually* obtained ſo *univerſal* a *Belief* as that of a God, and afterwards was proved to be falſe; and 'tis very difficult to imagine how ſuch a thing ſhould come to paſs: However, I can conceive and allow it to be poſſible, that a miſtaken *matter of Fact*, or a *conjectural Hypotheſis* of ſomething belonging to *natural Knowledge*, may, at ſome diſtance of time from its firſt appearance in the World, be pretty generally believed as certain; and afterwards by a Diſcovery of *freſh Circumſtances* in the *one*, or making *new Obſervations* about the *other*, a great part of Mankind may come to be of another Opinion, of the Truth of which they may be *much ſurer*: but an *Error* in matters of this nature cannot prove the *Poſſibility of a Miſtake* in the *Caſe in queſtion*. Becauſe the notion of a God reſults from *common Reflexion* and *Reaſoning*, and does not depend upon any, ſuch *Particular Circumſtances* of *Time*,

Time or *Place*, or any other *External helps*, and *inſtruments of Knowledge*, by which the *Learned* have ſometimes made new diſcoveries in the Caſes before mentioned.

All the *Obſervations of Senſe*, upon which the Belief of a God is founded, lie open to *every Man*, and are the ſame now that they ever were; and the *Inferences* drawn from them are *very eaſie*, and within the reach of *common Capacities*. If ſome have refined upon them, and carried their Reaſonings much farther than others, it has been only to ſatisfie the *unwarrantable Scruples*, and *Suſpicions* of a *few Pretenders to Learning*, who make uſe of that *little* Knowledge which they have, to argue themſelves out of *all*. But the *Generality* of Mankind, both *Learned*, and *Ignorant*, have ſo *firmly* believed, a God upon the *firſt plain obvious* grounds of Aſſent, as not to require, or ſtand in need of farther Satisfaction; and, therefore, their *Faith* cannot be owing to the *plauſible Colours*, or *ſpecious Reaſonings*, of any *firſt Inventors* of *falſe Notions* and *Opinions*.

But, after all, allowing the Suppoſition to be true, (which I think impoſſible) that there was *a time*, in which God was

no where acknowledged in the World; whoever *invented* the *Notion*, whatever were the *occaſions* of its being firſt Started or the *Arguments*, upon which it was *firſt* believed, the *Propagation* of it *afterwards*, and the *Conſtancy* and *Univerſality* of the Belief *ever ſince*, muſt have Sprung from the *Agreeableneſs* of ſuch an Opinion to the *common Reaſon of Mankind*, and to all their other Knowledge, and from the Strength and Sufficiency of thoſe *Reaſons*, upon which it is *now*, and has been *ſo long* received. For all the *firſt Arguments* and Grounds of believing it, if they were any other than what we have now, and which have been the ſame in all Ages, whereof any Knowledge is left us, have been all loſt, and, conſequently, their Influence hath been ſpent, long ago: neither, in any of the ancient Diſcourſes *yet extant*, concerning the *Being of a God*, is there any Appeal made to *Authority*, or *Antiquity*; as if Men were obliged to believe this Truth, becauſe it was ſo antient, or becauſe ſuch, and ſuch eminent Perſons had firſt recommended, or enjoyned the Belief of it: But all the Arguments made uſe of are wholly built upon the *Nature* and *Neceſſity of the thing*, which are always the ſame; and

and therefore have the ſame plain Reaſons for the Being of a God, always had the ſame Influence, and they will upon Examination, be found to have no Art or Sophiſtry in them, and every body that pleaſes may examine them.

Nothing then remains, but to enquire into the Force, and Validity of thoſe Reaſons, upon which our *Belief of a God* is originally founded.

I ſuppoſe it now but a *probable Perſwaſion*, ariſing from that Readineſs and Aſſurance of Aſſent, with which we embraced this Truth, and yielded to the *firſt obvious Proofs* of it, upon a bare Propoſal of them to the Underſtanding; in which Perſwaſion we are very much confirm'd by knowing, that *all Mankind* have conſtantly agreed with us in it; being fully ſatisfied from hence, that no *peculiar Temper of Mind*, or *Scheme of Thoughts*, no *private Intereſt*, or *national Byaſs*, has diſpoſed us to make this Judgment, but ſomething *common* to the *whole humane Nature*.

Upon theſe grounds have the *Generality of the World* always believed in God: and tho', to a nice Examiner of things they

may not appear Strong enough to Create *certain irreſiſtible Conviction*, yet are they ſufficient to juſtify a *full* and *entire Aſſent*, and to warrant our *acting* according to it. For to ſuſpect a thing to be falſe, and to *act* as if it were ſo, upon a *bare imaginable Poſſibility* that it may be ſo; or rather, becauſe we have not received the *higheſt degree* of Proof which the thing is, in its own Nature, capable of, when, at the ſame time, we have no manner of Reaſon to diſtruſt that evidence *we have*; can be neither *rational*, *prudent*, nor *ſafe*.

However, ſince there are Perſons, whoſe *Actions*, and (at leaſt, *pretended*) *Opinions* come up to *this Character*, we will conſider the *common Proofs* of a Deity *more cloſely* and *throughly*, and ſee if, what upon the firſt View appears ſo *probable*, and makes ſo ſtrong an Impreſſion upon the Mind, may not, upon farther Examination, ſtrike us with ſuch *Certainty* and Power of Conviction as we cannot reſiſt, without queſtioning all our other Knowledge, and diſclaiming all manner of Diſtinction between Truth and Falſhood: which is,

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The Third Conſideration I propoſed in treating of this Argument: Whether it be, not *only* a *poſſible*, or *probable* Opinion that there may be a God; but a *certain* and *infallible* Truth that there is one.

All the *common natural* Arguments and Reaſons; upon which the general Belief of a God is founded, are taken from the *viſible frame of things*, called the *World*, and from thoſe ſeveral *parts* of it, which fall under every man's Notice and Obſervation; upon a ſlight Survey of which, any man who is in the leaſt capable of Reflection, where ever his Thoughts light, will *perceive* or imagine that he perceives, plain Marks, and Tokens of *Power*, and *Wiſdom*, much of the ſame kind, tho' in proportion far greater than ever he has obſerv'd in any of the moſt wonderful Effects of *humane Skill*, and *Strength*; the immediate Reſult of which, I believe, would be this Concluſion, That certainly there is *ſome Being*, exceedingly *more powerful*, and *knowing* than *Man*, who was the *Author*, *and Contriver* of this ſtupendous Fabrick.

And, if *Admiration*, and *Curioſity*, invite him to farther Enquiries, (as 'tis dif-

ficult to ſuppoſe they ſhould not,) the *Compaſs*, and *Extent* of the whole Work, the *Variety* of Objects in it, the *Conſtancy*, and *Uniformity* of ſome Appearances, and the *regular Changes*, and *Revolutions* of others; the *Connexion*, and *Dependance* of the ſeveral parts; the *Union*, and *Confederacy* of multitudes, of different kinds, towards ſome common Production; and the *various*, *particular*, *Ends* and *Uſes* of things, all *aſſiſtant* to one another, and *ſubſervient* to ſome *general Deſign*; all theſe, I ſay, well conſider'd, and weigh'd together, would ſtrengthen, and confirm his former Judgments, and farther diſpoſe him to conclude, That the *Author* of all theſe Inſtances of Power is *able* to do whatever elſe can be conceived *poſſible*, nothing elſe conceivable ſeeming more difficult to this Inquirer than what he ſees already done; That a Being of ſo much Knowledge, as his Works declare him to be, ſo vaſtly exceeding *Man*'s, is able to do Things, which are far above *Man*'s Reach, and Comprehenſion to conceive at all; And that he who has ſo wiſely order'd and diſpoſed every thing he has made to the moſt proper Ends, has therefore exerciſed his *Power*, ſo far, and no farther,

farther, becauſe it was moſt agreeable to his Wiſdom ſo to do.

There is nothing, I think, in all this, but what is eaſie, and natural, and what may very well be imagin'd to be found out, without the help of much Learning, or an extraordinary Talent of Reflexion; and yet, this is what has conſtantly, in all Ages, ſatisfied both the *Learned*, and the *Thoughtful*, and ſtood the Teſt of *Time*, and *Sophiſtry*, and *Malice*.

But ſuppoſe, *ſome extravagant Thinkers*, entirely under the Government of their *Senſes* and *Luſts*, ſhould diſtruſt all their reaſonings of this kind, and, becauſe they were not bye, when the World was made, and do not ſee the Hand which ſupports the Frame, and moves all the ſeveral Wheels of it, ſhould therefore doubt of the Being of a God, notwithſtanding the *Teſtimony of Nature*; is there no *certain* Proof to be given, that we are not miſtaken who believe a God upon *theſe* Grounds? Several have already ſhewn that there is, and this is what I ſhall at preſent endeavour to make good, in the cleareſt and moſt unexceptionable manner that I can.

Now, *Certainty* or *Evidence* (which I ſhall all along take in the ſame Senſe) is ſuch a *firm well-grounded Aſſent*, to the Truth of what we perceive, as excludes, not only all manner of *doubt*, but all *conceivable poſſibility of a Miſtake*: And thus, I ſuppoſe, and take it for granted, that we are *certain* of all our own *Perceptions* and *Senſations*, whatever we feel or are conſcious to our ſelves of; and that we are fully, and undecivably aſſured of a great many of our *Judgments*, founded upon the juſt, and well-regulated Reports of our *external Senſes*, to the ſame *degree* as we are of the Agreement and Diſagreement of any *pure intellectual Ideas*.

Except this be allowed, we have no *Principles* to reaſon from, nor indeed any *Knowledge* at all, not ſo much as *Scepticiſm*; but univerſal Darkneſs and Confuſion cover humane Nature: But he who grants thus much, and is true to his own *Reaſon*, muſt acknowledge that *there is a God*; as will appear from the following Conſiderations.

Being then, as I ſuppoſe, by an *infallible Conſciouſneſs*, ſatisfied of our *own Operations*, and *Exiſtence*, and, by *various Impreſſions*, made upon certain *Organs* of

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the *Body*, fully convinced of the *reality* of things *without* us; upon farther *Obſervation* and *Reaſoning* we come to theſe *certain Concluſions:*

That there are a great many *Changes* in the World; That a great many *new Appearances* preſent themſelves to us, which, before, were no where to be found; and that others go off, and diſappear, the *riſe* and *original* of which we never knew; That, under all theſe *Changes*, and *Varieties* of *Appearance*, there is ſomething, *conſtantly the ſame*, which we call *Matter*, or *ſolid extended Subſtance*; That the *different Appearances* in Matter, which our Senſes inform us of, proceed *immediately* from the Differences of *Bulk*, *Number*, *Figure*, *Motion*, or *Reſt*; That we are *conſcious* of ſeveral things in our ſelves, which we perceive to be *different* from all *theſe*; That we were not *always* thus conſcious, but that there was a time, when this *Conſciouſneſs* began, and when *all* that we *perceive* in our ſelves as *diſtinct* from Matter, (which we call *Mind* or *Spirit*,) was firſt *joined* and *united* to a certain portion of Matter, called *humane Body*; That, when this humane Body *changes* its *Appearance*, and ſuch a particular

cular *Union* of the parts of it is *diſſolved*, then that *Conſciouſneſs*, and all thoſe *internal Operations*, which are now the Object of it, *ceaſe* to be joined with that *Matter* which they were juſt before *united* to.

Being well aſſured of the Truth of all theſe *Concluſions*, we are immediately led to theſe following *Enquiries*.

From whence ariſe all theſe things? *How* came there to be ſuch a thing as *Matter? When* and *by what means*, did it begin to *exiſt?* What is the *Cauſe* of all thoſe ſucceſſive *Changes* in it? And why does it exiſt after ſo many *different manners? Whence* are *we* our ſelves? What was it that *gave* us ſuch *conſcious Beings*; *How* are they *united* to our *Bodies?* what *limits* the Continuance, and afterwards *diſſolves* the Bond of this wonderful *Union?*

Now, in purſuit of theſe Enquiries, we find it utterly *inconceivable*, and *impoſſible* that any thing ſhould *make it ſelf*; that a *Being*, which once did not exiſt, ſhould *begin* to be, *of it ſelf*, without the Aſſiſtance of *ſome other* Being which exiſted *before* it: From whence we are

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irreſiſtibly convinc'd that ſomething muſt be *eternal*; ſince otherwiſe, nothing could ever have been: for, if any Time can be ſuppoſed, in which *nothing* did exiſt, *nothing* would *ever* have exiſted unleſs *that*, which once *was not*, could raiſe *it ſelf* into Being; but this is *impoſſible*, and 'tis *certain* that ſomething *now* really *is*, therefore ſomething muſt be *eternal*.

And, as, from hence 'tis evident that ſomething *muſt be eternal*, ſo, 'tis plain from the *ſeveral Changes* which we obſerve in the World, from the Succeſſion of *new conſcious Beings*, and from the *different Diſpoſitions* of *Matter*, that *Every* thing *is not eternal*; now, if ſomething be eternal, and a great many things are not eternal, then it plainly follows, that every thing which is *not eternal*, was derived from that which *is*; (*i. e.*) *originally* received its *Being*, and whatever belongs to it, from ſome *eternal Author* or *Cauſe*: becauſe, if it had not, we muſt ſuppoſe, either that ſomething *made it ſelf*, which before is ſhewed to be *impoſſible*; or, that *one temporary* Being produced an *other*, which it could not do, but by the Force and Efficacy of *ſuch Powers*, which, together with

with its *Exiſtence*, it *received* from ſome *other* temporary Being, and ſo on, till we come to ſome *eternal Fountain* of *all Power*, and *Being*.

The only Queſtion then is, *What is eternal?* for upon this depends the Reſolution of all our other Doubts and Enquiries: and for our better and more certain Satisfaction in this point, I ſhall,

Firſt, Conſider all the *Claims* and *Pretenſions* that are made to this glorious Prerogative of *eternal Exiſtence:*

Afterwards, I ſhall examine what thoſe *Attributes* are which muſt *neceſſarily* belong to an *eternal* Being:

And then ſhew that *that Being* to which *theſe Attributes* agree, is what we call *God*, and that there is *no other* Being which *is*, or *can be* veſted with the *like* Characters.

1. Firſt then, As to the *Claims* and *Pretenſions* to *eternal Exiſtence*: theſe, I think, are all the *Suppoſitions* that can be made.

Eeither that *Matter alone* is eternal.

Or that *Mind* alone is eternal.

Or that *Mind* and *Matter* are *both* eternal.

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But *Matter* may be conſidered under three *different* States.

For either we imagine it as having continued from all Eternity in *one entire* ſolid *Maſs*, without any *Diſtinction*, or *Motion* of its parts.

Or we conſider it as *looſe*, and *divided* into innumerable little *Particles*, all in *conſtant Agitation* or *Motion*. Out of which *quiet Maſs*, or *Moving Atoms*, the *preſent frame of things* was, in time, ſtruck out, and *form'd*.

Or elſe we muſt ſuppoſe that it has *eternally* exiſted under that *Form*, which we now call the *World*, which, in the *principal parts* of its *Structure*, was always the ſame, with a *conſtant Succeſſion* of ſeveral of the *chief Species*, or ſorts of things in it.

There is nothing elſe *imaginable*, but an *eternal Succeſſion* of *new Worlds*, and *new Species* of Beings in them; which is an Opinion too extravagantly abſurd to be owned by any body: Becauſe, who ever affirms this, muſt be obliged to grant, either that every new World *makes it ſelf*, (which is a contradiction already exploded) or that what he calls *new World*'s are only

only ſo many *new Forms*, all owing their production to ſome *common principle*, which is *Eternally the ſame* ; and ſo the notion falls in with ſome of the other before mentioned.

2. But, which of theſe Hypotheſes has *Truth* and *Certainty* of its ſide, is the next thing to be enquired into; and the beſt way to determine it will be by conſidering the *neceſſary Attributes*, and Characters of an *eternal Being*.

It has been proved already, from the *preſent State of things*, that *all Beings*, which exiſt *in Time*, muſt be *made* by ſomething which was *eternal*; becauſe it was *impoſſible* that they ſhould have exiſted any *other way:* The ſame will now appear *à priori* from the *Nature* of an *eternal* Being, the *inſeparable Characters* of which are, *neceſſary Exiſtence*, and *all poſſible Perfection*; both which are included in the *Notion* of an eternal Being, and do evidently infer each other; For an *eternal Being* muſt *exiſt neceſſarily*, and have *all poſſible Perfection*; and whatever *exiſts neceſſarily* muſt alſo have *all poſſible Perfection* ; as whatever has *all poſſible Perfection* muſt *exiſt neceſſarily*.

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An eternal Being muſt *exiſt neceſſarily* becauſe it exiſts *of it ſelf*, for it *always was* what it *is*, it *always* had the *ſame Nature* which it has, and therefore there *always* was the *ſame Reaſon*, that is to ſay, the *ſame neceſſity* for its exiſting. This is too evident to need a farther Proof.

The other neceſſary Character of an eternal Being is, that it has *all poſſible Perfection*; that is, that there is nothing *conceivable*, or in the Nature of things *poſſible* which added to it would give it any *Advantage*, or, in any ſenſe, render it *more perfect* than it is.

This is plain from the very Notion of *Poſſibility* which implies is a *Power* ſomewhere correſpondent to the utmoſt *Extent*, and *Capacity* of things *poſſible*; ſo that to ſay a thing is *poſſible*, is to ſay that there is ſome *Power* capable of *producing* or *having* it; and, therefore, if you ſuppoſe an *eternal neceſſary Being* to *want* any *Perfection*, what is imagin'd to be *wanting* to it muſt be, for that very reaſon, *impoſſible*; for, it cannot be conceived to *want* what it is in its *own Power* to *have*, and it can receive nothing which it has not from *any other* Being; becauſe no other Being of *greater Power* is *conceivable*, not a

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temporary Being, becauſe the *Exiſtence* and *Perfection* of all temporary Beings are derived from that which is *eternal*; not an *eternal neceſſary* Being, becauſe this which is ſuppoſed *imperfect*, is *as much* an *eternal neceſſary* Being as the *other*, and therefore muſt have all the *ſame Perfections*. For why ſhould the Perfections of the one be limited and thoſe of the other not? And whence ſhould this Impotence proceed in one *eternal neceſſary Being* which was not in another, when neither of them has any other Principle of its *Exiſtence* and *Perfection* but its ſelf? There can be no difference aſſigned or imagined between one *eternal neceſſary Being*, and another; and therefore wherever theſe attributes are found they muſt be accompanied with *all poſſible perfection*.

3. Now if *ſomething* certainly be *eternal*, and *neceſſary Exiſtence*, and *all poſſible Perfection*, be the *eſſential Characters* of an *eternal Being*, (as has been proved,) then *this eternal Being* muſt be what we call *God*; the *Characters* and *Attributes* of an *eternal Being* belonging to *Him*, and to *no other*, as will eaſily appear, by applying them firſt to that notion which we have framed

framed of *God* and afterwards to the ſeveral *Hypotheſes* before mention'd.

That knowledge *Power*, and *Pleaſure*, are *Perfections*, cannot by us Men be doubted of, who can frame no Notions of *any other*, and who meaſure the *goodneſs* and *perfection* of *every thing elſe* by its *Miniſtry* and *Subſerviency* to *theſe*, ſo *as* to conclude that, were there no Beings which injoyed *theſe Perfections*, there would be no difference between a *regular World*, and a *Chaos*; or between *Multiplicity*, and *Variety of Being*, and eternal *univerſal Nothing*.

Theſe, therefore, muſt be the *principal Characters* of an *eternal Being*; and his *Knowledge*, *Power* and *Happineſs*, muſt be *commenſurate* to his *Exiſtence*, that is, *eternal neceſſary* Qualifications, bounded only by *himſelf*; and, whatever elſe is *made* by this eternal Being, as 'tis proved that every thing *is*, which *is made*, muſt be made for *his good Pleaſure*, and for the *Happineſs* of *thoſe Beings* which are capable of it; there being no other *end*, upon which *ſuch a Being*, as we here ſuppoſe, can *act*; and all his *Works* muſt carry the Marks of their *Author* upon them, that is, be ſuch as are fit for a Being of *thoſe glorious Qua-*

lifications to *make*, and *deſign* for *ſuch Ends*.

Thus may the *whole Idea* of *God*, as it is before deſcribed, be eaſily made out, by *poſitive direct conſequence*, from the *Principles* juſt now laid down, and prov'd; as plainly appears from the *nature*, and *extent* of the *Principles themſelves*, and from *thoſe Inſtances* which I have given, in the *chief*, and moſt *diſtinguiſhing*, moſt *conteſted* Characters of the Deity.

But I am ſenſible that this way of proving a God, tho' in it ſelf the trueſt, and moſt *direct*, is not like to meet with *ſo general* an Acceptance, or convince Men ſo effectually, as a *leſs degree* of Evidence in *another kiná*; becauſe, the *Demonſtration* conſiſting of many parts, and the *Ideas* upon which it is founded being *purely intellectual*, and not admitting of any *ſenſible Repreſentation*, there are but few who are capable of ſo much *Steadineſs*, and *Attention* of Mind, as is required to perceive the *whole force* of the Proof.

But then 'tis certain, that *thoſe*, who *deny a God*, muſt not own themſelves to be of the number of thoſe, who are incapable of comprehending ſuch an Argument as this, becauſe they will, from hence, be proved

proved to act very unreaſonably, in *denying*, what, by their own Confeſſion, they *do not underſtand*, and conſequently are not *fit Judges* of; which is as abſurd, as to deny a *Propoſition* in *Mathematicks*, without being able to underſtand the *Demonſtration* given of it: and, here, it will be allowed by all, that the *Demonſtration* is never the *leſs true* and *concluding*, becauſe there are but few, who have made ſo great a progreſs in *this Science*, and are ſo well vers'd in *this ſort of reaſoning*, as to perceive the *Validity* of it.

And therefore, it cannot be altogether improper to offer, what may be call'd a *metaphyſical abſtracted proof* of a *Deity*, for the *Satisfaction* of ſuch, as by ſteady Reflexion, and a juſt Uſe of their Reaſon, will eaſily underſtand it; and, for the *Shame* and *Confuſion* of thoſe, who renouncing *common Opinions* and *Arguments*, upon no *Grounds*, pretend to *new Diſcoveries*, in Matters which they *do not underſtand*, and conſequently *cannot diſprove*.

However, I have been as ſhort as I poſſible could be, upon the *poſitive* part of the Argument, and as plain as the Subject would give me leave to be, having

made uſe of the *commoneſt*, *eaſieſt* Terms, which the Language would furniſh me with, upon ſuch Matters as I have had occaſion to ſpeak of: ſo that, all the Difficulty I can imagine in the Apprehenſion of what I have ſaid, muſt ariſe from the *nature* of the *Ideas*, and from the *connexion*, and *variety of Conſequences*, which are not eaſily to be *comprehended* in *one view*, eſpecially without any Aſſiſtance from *Senſe*. But this could not be avoided.

Having therefore, as *clearly* and *intelligibly* as I could, in a *poſitive direct* manner, proved, that *there is a God*, by ſhewing, That there certainly *is* ſome *eternal Being*; that all the *Characters* and *Attributes* of an eternal Being do *agree* and *belong* to *that Idea* we have conceived of *God*; and therefore that *that eternal Being*, which *certainly is*, is *as certainly* what we call *God*: Having, I ſay *poſitively*, and *directly* proved this, I proceed to make good the ſame Truth *negatively*, or *by way of Conſequence*; which, taking this for proved That *there is ſome eternal Being*, I do, by ſhewing, that the *Characters* and *Attributes* of an eternal Being can agree to *nothing*

thing elſe but what we call *God*, therefore they muſt agree to *God*, therefore *that eternal Being*, which certainly *is*, muſt as certainly be *God*.

In the Proſecution of which Argument, tho' I make uſe of the *Principles* inſiſted upon in the former, and tho' the *Concluſions* from them, not being *direct*, have not, in *their own nature*, the *ſame* degree of Evidence as *poſitive direct Deductions* have, yet I queſtion not but I ſhall be better, and more generally underſtood, and ſhall more ſatisfactorily prove what I have undertaken, to a *great* many Perſons, *this* way, than the *other*.

For, beſides that the *falſhood* of all *wrong Hypotheſes* is, generally, much eaſier *demonſtrated*, and *perceived*, than the *certainty* of the *true* one, I ſhall have frequent recourſe to *ſenſible inſtances*, which, rendring the things preſent to our Minds, ſeem Clearer, to moſt People, than *pure intellectual Ideas*, tho' our reaſon aſſures us that they are not: And therefore, that I may not be wanting to my *Subject*, and my *Deſign* in treating of it, I think my ſelf obliged to accommodate my ſelf, to *all underſtandings*, and to *all* manner of *Prejudices*.

It has been proved already, from the *preſent Exiſtence* of things, that ſomething muſt be *eternal*; we have reckon'd up the ſeveral Pretenſions that can be made to *Eternal* Exiſtence; and have conſider'd the *Characters* and *Attributes* of an eternal Being

Now, if that which is eternal *be not God*, and the Characters and Attributes of an eternal Being *do not belong to him*, then *ſomething elſe* muſt be eternal, and ſome other of the fore-mention'd Suppoſitions muſt be true; but, upon Examination, I believe, it will be found, that *none* of *thoſe* Suppoſitions, which *exclude the being of a God*, can be true; and, therefore, what I have proved concerning God muſt ſtand Good.

This it is my preſent Buſineſs to ſhew: and, moreover, I ſhall endeavour to make it appear, that, as *God* is certainly *eternal*, and *nothing elſe* can be eternal, *excluſive of him*, ſo likewiſe he is the *only eternal Being*, and whatever in any of the other *Hypotheſes is conceived* to be eternal, if it *really be* ſo, muſt, in ſome manner, *entirely belong to him*.

First then, Let us frame to our ſelves a Notion of *Matter alone*, with its Parts all *united*, and *at reſt*: and when we have done ſo, we ſhall eaſily judge, how impoſſible it is to conceive, that matter ſhould have ſo exiſted, *neceſſarily of it ſelf*, from all *Eternity*, and that, *in time*, the World, and all things in it, in the manner we *now* behold them, ſhould have *proceeded from* or have been *produced by it*.

For, without running over all the Characters of an eternal Being, the abſurdity of *this Suppoſition* will ſufficiently appear, by what we *plainly perceive*, and know, and what *conſtantly*, and *irreſiſtibly* offers it ſelf to our *ſenſes*, and *underſtandings*, in the preſent frame of things.

Solidity, *Extention*, *Figure*, *Motion*, *Perception*, and *Will*, are the *chief* of all our Ideas, and what we are the beſt acquainted with; and, ſo far as we perceive them *diſtinct* from one another, *Separately exiſting*, or *neceſſarily connected*, our *Reaſonings* about them are the *ſureſt* of any we have; ſo that, if we are *miſtaken* in *theſe*, I cannot ſee how we *have*, or *are capable* of having, any *Knowledge* at all.

Solidity, *Extenſion*, and *Figure*, I do not only perceive to be *conſtantly united*, but *neceſſarily*, and *inſeparably* to co-exiſt together in the ſame *Subject*, which I call *Matter* or *Body*; ſo that we cannot conceive any *ſort of Body*, or *Portion of Matter*, without theſe three Qualities belonging to it; but it does not follow, that, where-ever *theſe three* Qualities co-exiſt together, *there* is either *Motion*, *Perception*, or *Will*, there being no *neceſſary Connexion* between *any* of *theſe* latter *Ideas* and the *other* before mentioned; as is plain, not only from the *Natures* of the Ideas themſelves, but from their *ſeparate Exiſtence* actually perceived by us.

How then does *Matter*, which we now ſuppoſe to exiſt without any *Motion*, *Perception*, or *Will*, come to have *Motion* added to it?

All the *Motion* that we perceive in *Bodies without us* is made by *Succeſſive Impulſes* from one *Body to* another, where *every portion* of Matter owes its Motion to *ſome other*; but this cannot help us to conceive how *Motion* ſhould *begin* where every thing is *at reſt*: the only *Idea* that we receive from *Body*, with reſpect to *Motion*, is that of a *Capacity of being moved* when

when it is at reſt, and not of a *power of moving its ſelf:* this we have from what paſſes *within us*, when, without any *external Impulſe* upon us, by a *bare Thought, or Determination* of our ſelves, we begin a Motion in our *own Bodies*, and, by that means, *communicate* it to *other Bodies*, which were before at reſt; which *power of beginning Motion* is included in what we call *Will:* but *Matter* Being ſuppoſed to exiſt without *Perception* and *Will*, and conſequently without this *power of beginning* Motion *in its ſelf*; and there being *nothing elſe* to *communicate* Motion to it; it neceſſarily follows from hence, that it muſt *eternally continue* in the ſame ſtate of *Union*, *Indiſtinction*, and *Reſt*.

There needs no more for the overthrowing *this Hypotheſis*, no ſtreſs being ever laid upon it.

In the next place then, if we imagine *all the parts* of this Material World *looſe* from one another, and all *in motion*; it will be quite as irrational to think, that ſo it muſt have been *eternally* and *neceſſarily*, till, at *ſome certain time*, the *ſcattered Atoms met together*, or were *diſpoſed* after ſuch

ſuch a manner, as produced the *preſent Structure*, and *Conſtitution* of things.

Many are the *Abſurdities* and *Inconſiſtencies* with which this Opinion is chargeable; but I ſhall, at preſent, inſtance but in two.

The firſt is, the ſuppoſing an *eternal motion* of *different Particles* of *Matter*, *before the Production* of the World; which implies an *infinite ſucceſſion* of *Effects*, without *any Cauſe* to produce them: For, *Motion*, being ſomething *diſtinct* from *Matter*, does not *neceſſarily exiſt*, becauſe *Matter* exiſts, for then, it would *always* exiſt, in *every Particle* of *Matter*; which we ſee it does not; nor does it exiſt *of it ſelf*, *independently of Matter*, becauſe it cannot exiſt *without it*; and 'tis plain that *Matter* could not produce it in its ſelf *from all Eternity*, becauſe it cannot produce it *at all*: and therefore there can be no ſuch thing as *eternal Motion*, or *ſucceſſion of Motion*, in different parts of Matter; becauſe, every Motion is a *meer Effect* and *Paſſion*, and there is *no active power* any where aſſignable, or conceivable, which could *produce*, or *cauſe* ſuch an *Effect*: ſo that to ſuppoſe an *eternal Motion* without an *eternal Power of moving*, is one very great

great Abſurdity, which thoſe are guilty of who ſet up the Hypotheſis of *Atoms*.

The *other* is, the aſcribing ſuch *new Effects* to *Matter and Motion* together, *in the production* of the World, as, for a *whole Eternity before*, never *proceeded* from them, and could not poſſibly, *at any time*, be *produced* by them. For, *Matter* and *Motion* not implying *Perception* and *Will*, (ſeveral *Bodies in motion* being now actually perceived to *exiſt without* them, and the *whole Syſtem* of *moving Atoms* being, in the preſent Hypotheſis, ſuppoſed ſo to exiſt, *before the Beginning of the World*,) we ſhall never be able, from hence, to account for the Exiſtence of Beings endued with *Perception* and *Will*, which are Qualifications, *in their own Natures*, utterly *diſtinct from* thoſe of *Extention*, Figure and *Motion*, and have no conceivable relation to them.

That *theſe* three latter may be, where *the* former are not, is plain: How then do *thoſe other* come to be added to them? If *Matter at reſt*, *whatever* degree of *Extention*, or kind of *Figure*, it is imagin'd to have, can never make us conceive any *poſſibility of Motion* in it, without the help of *ſomething elſe* beſides *Extention* and

and *Figure* to produce it (as is prov'd before;) ſo neither can *Matter and Motion* together, whatever variety of *Bulk*, *Texture*, or *Velocity* we repreſent to our ſelves, give us any Idea of *Perception* and *Will*, or of a *Power of producing* them: But, *Matter in motion* muſt *eternally move* on, or *reſt* and *move by turns* if you pleaſe, without advancing to any *new Perfections*. For whether the parts of which it conſiſts, be *groſſer* or *finer*; be of *this* or *that Figure*; or *move quicker* or *ſlower*; which way ſoever we conſider *matter*, 'tis, in all Forms, equally incapable of *Thinking*, *Willing*, or *Moving it ſelf*. Nor is there the leaſt ground to expect any Powers of this kind from *Flame* or *Air*, rather than from *Stone* or *Clay*; or to ſuppoſe that the *glorious Body of the Sun* has any nearer reſemblance to what we aſcribe to *God*, than the *contemptible ſtock of a Tree* hath.

But this Subject has been ſo *learnedly*, and *fully* handled already by others, that I ſhall not enlarge any farther upon it, nor expoſe this ridiculous Scheme of things, by ſhewing all the *peculiar Inconſiſtencies* which attend it; but ſhall proceed to examine the other *Hypotheſis* concerning the

Being

Being of the World, which is thought, by ſome, to be more defenſible.

In the third place then it is ſuppoſed, that the World has *eternally exiſted*, under the *ſame Form* wherein we now behold it, as to the *principal parts* of its Structure, with a *conſtant Succeſſion* of ſeveral of the *chief Species* or ſorts of things in it.

But this Opinion of the *Eternity of the World* has been the moſt exploded of any, tho' moſt of the Favourers of it have, at the ſame time, aſſerted the *eternal Exiſtence of a God* too. And the Reaſon of this is, becauſe the greateſt part of the *moſt ancient Philoſophers* and *learned Men* thought that they perceived ſuch viſible Marks and Tokens of the *Newneſs of the World*, in the *Riſe*, *Propagation*, and *Increaſe* of *Societies* and *Governments*, *Languages* and *Laws*, *Arts* and *Sciences*; and the *Tradition* concerning the *Original* and *Beginning* of Things was, in *their time*, ſo *freſh*, and ſo *generally* received in all Countries, that few of them were able to reconcile all this with the *eternal* exiſtence of *the World*: And *this Tradition* having all along *continued*, and the Truth of *thoſe ancient Obſervations* having been more and more con-

firm'd

firm'd by *many new Inventions* of things *ſince*, ſome of which were of ſuch *general Uſe*, that 'tis impoſſible to imagine, either that they ſhould not have been invented *before*, if the World had been of *a very long continuance*, or ſhould have been loſt again after they were once invented, the *ſame Objections* have conſtantly lain againſt the *Eternity of the World*: and theſe have been ſtrengthen'd by ſeveral *other Arguments*, drawn from the many *Abſurdities*, and *Inconſiſtencies*, which ſeem to be implied in the Notion of *eternal Succeſſion*.

All which, and whatever elſe can be ſaid againſt the *Eternity of the World*, when aſſerted *together with the eternal Exiſtence of a God*, do more ſtrongly conclude againſt this Suppoſition, when the *Being of a God* is not taken into it, under which reſpect I now conſider it; and thus conſider'd, it is moreover, beſides what has been already alledg'd, attended with the *ſame* Difficulties, and Chargeable with the ſame *Objections*, as the *former Hypotheſis* was.

For, ſuppoſing the *main bulk* and *frame of the World* to have been *eternally the ſame*: *Matter* and *Motion* were no more capable of *eternally producing*, ſuch a Succeſſion of various Objects, as we now perceive in the

the World, than they were of producing them, and the World together, *in time*; and yet, if we ſuppoſe an *eternal Succeſſion* of new Objects *without a God*, they muſt all be produced by the Power of *Matter* and *Motion*: For, every *particular new Object*, being produced *in time*, muſt owe its Being to that which was *eternal*; and nothing, in this Suppoſition, being *eternal* but *Matter* and *Motion*, every *new Generation* of Beings muſt have their *Original* from *theſe*, the *precedent Generation* having no other *Powers* nor *Differences* than the *ſucceeding*, but what ariſe from the *various Diſpoſition* of *Matter* and *Motion*.

This is plain, in relation to all ſuch Beings as want the Faculties of *Perception* and *Will*; and, upon Examination, the Caſe will be found to be the ſame, with reſpect to ſuch as are endued with *theſe Qualifications*: For, even *theſe* alſo, in the preſent Hypotheſis, muſt be allowed to derive their *whole Being* from *Matter* and *Motion*; becauſe they are *temporary Beings*, which *began* to be, and there is *nothing elſe eternal* but *Matter* and *Motion*, and conſequently there is no other *Cauſe* aſſignable for their *Production*.

Which

Which need not be proved to thoſe, who hold the Eternity of the World, *without a God*; becauſe, there are none, I believe, of this Opinion, but ſuch as do aſcribe the *Original* of *Perception* and *Will* to *Matter and Motion*, alledging that the *former* are only different *Modifications* of the *latter:* in which they act very conſiſtently with themſelves, in making an abſurd Scheme all of a piece, not blending *Truth* with *Falſhood*, but taking in *all* the *Abſurdities*, which do any way depend upon one another, and belong to the main building.

However, that I may leave no room for Exception from any ſide, I think my ſelf obliged to ſhew, that, if *Perception* and *Will* are not the *Iſſue* and *Effects* of *Matter* and *Motion*, as I have already ſhewn that they are not, the *Exiſtence* of *intelligent Beings*, without a *God*, is *inconceivable*, and *impoſſible*; becauſe *no other Cauſe* of their Production can be aſſigned.

For, ſuppoſe it ſhould be enquired, how ſuch a *particular Man* came to *exiſt*, how he came to *begin* to be a *conſcious Being*; he did not *put himſelf* together, in ſuch a manner as we now perceive him to exiſt, he did not *give himſelf* thoſe *Capacities*, and

Powers

Powers which he is *conſcious* of, together with his *Conſciouſneſs* of them; this is a flat *Contradiction*, and granted to be ſo on all hands.

Whence then did he derive this mighty *Difference of Being*, which we perceive in him, by which he is diſtinguiſh'd from all other things that fall under our Cognizance? Not from *ſome intelligent Being*, of infinitely *greater Perfections*, but of the *like kind* with thoſe he perceives in himſelf; nor from any *mechanical Powers* of *Matter*, and *Motion:* both theſe Cauſes are ſet aſide, in the preſent Enquiry.

Nothing then remains, but that the Man, who *now exiſts*, and *ſometime ago began to be*, muſt have received his *Exiſtence*, and all thoſe *Qualifications* which diſtinguiſh him from Matter, from *ſome other Man* of the *like nature* with himſelf, who exiſted *before* him; who likewiſe received his Being from ſome other Man, *&c.* But this is *abſurd*, and *irrational*; not only, upon the account of the *infinite Subordination* of *Cauſes*, and *Effects*, which follows from this Suppoſition, and which is by every body rejected as a ſhocking repugnant Notion: but, becauſe it is hereby affirm'd, that *one Being* may, *ſolely*, by *its*

own power, produce another Being of the *ſame Nature* and *Perfections* with its ſelf; which I take to be the next *Impoſſibility* to that of a *Being's making it ſelf.*

For *Body*, and *Mind*, are the only kinds, of being, that we know any thing of; and, by all that we can learn of *Body*, or *Matter*, we conceive it utterly impoſſible that any ſort of body ſhould *produce* the *leaſt new Particle* of Matter: nay, 'tis generally affirmed by the Learned, that *one Body* never imparts any *Motion* to *another* without loſing it ſelf what the *other* receives: This is certain, that, in all the *material Productions* obſervable by us, there is only a *new diſpoſition of the parts of Matter*, and not any *new Being* made; neither is this new Diſpoſition received *entirely* from ſome *other Being, of the ſame kind*, or *texture* with it ſelf, but from *material Particles* and *Motions*, conveyed from *ſeveral diſtant* parts of Nature.

Thus, we ſee, that it is not *one Seed*, or *one Tree*, that immediately begets *another*; but the *Sun*, and the *Rain*, and the *Earth*, and *other Bodies*, contribute their ſhare towards raiſing the Seed into a Tree: which produces new Seed, that muſt undergo the like Changes, and borrow from the

the ſame Cauſes, before it can attain to the form of another Tree.

And 'tis farther remarkable that none of thoſe *different diſpoſitions of Matter*, which we find in the World, can be conceived to be the *product* of *Matter and Motion alone*, without the Aſſiſtance and Regulation of ſome *other Being* of *higher Perfections*, as has been ſhewn before.

How then is it poſſible, that *one Mind*, or *conſcious Being*, ſhould produce *another entire diſtinct* Mind, or Being, of equal perfections with it ſelf, without loſing any thing from it ſelf, or *borrowing* any Aſſiſtance from any other kind of Being exiſting in the World? and, what is as ſtrange, do all this, without being as *conſcious* of *this* it's *chief Perfection*, as it is of all its *other?*

This, I ſay, cannot poſſibly be; and therefore, If the World be *eternal, without a God*, all the *continual Changes*, and *new Productions*, which have ever been in it, muſt be aſcribed to *Matter and Motion*; only, Matter and Motion not being able to *produce ſuch Effects*: from hence I conclude, that the *Eternity of the World*, conſidered as it now is, *without the eternal Exiſtence of a God*, is *impoſſible*.

And thus I have conſider'd all the ſeveral *Hypotheſes*, which pretend to give any account of the preſent Conſtitution of things, called, the *World*, *excluſively to the Being of a God.* And, from what has been offered upon theſe Heads, it ſufficiently appears, that *nothing elſe*, which is ſuppoſed to be *eternal*, beſides *God*, hath the *eſſential properties* of an *eternal Being*, viz. *neceſſary exiſtence*, and all *poſſible Perfection*; or can be the *cauſe* of all thoſe *Temporary Beings*, which have been *produced in time.*

For, whatſoever is ſaid to be *eternal*, which is not *God*, is, at the ſame time, ſaid to want thoſe Perfections, which we aſcribe to God, and which are certainly the chief, if not the only ones, imaginable by us. And, as 'tis manifeſt that, where theſe are wanting, there cannot be *all poſſible perfection*; ſo, 'tis abſurd to ſuppoſe, that, what is deſtitute of *Knowledge*, and *Will*, ſhould *neceſſarily Cauſe*, and be the *Author* of all *Temporary Productions*, rather than ſuch a Being, as is indued with theſe Characters, in the higheſt and moſt perfect Degree.

'Tis very plain, then, from hence, that there is ſuch an *eternal Being*, as we call *God*,

God; becauſe *nothing elſe* can be *Eternal excluſive of him*: all the ſuppoſitions of this nature, being proved to be falſe, and abſurd.

The next thing, to be inquired into, is; Whether *God* be the *only eternal Being*, or Whether *any thing elſe*, that has been formerly ſuppoſed, can be likewiſe *Eternal together with him*.

But, before I enter upon the Conſideration of thoſe ſeveral *Hypotheſes*, which do, all, tho' in a different manner, eſtabliſh an *eternal Co-exiſtence* of *Matter* and *Mind*; I think it neceſſary to premiſe ſomething concerning the *Nature*, and *Diſtinction* of theſe two kinds of Beings, as far as we are capable of perceiving them; that, ſo, I may cut off a great many *Diſputes*, and *Miſtakes*, occaſion'd by the *Confuſion* of our Ideas upon this Subject, and, what I have to ſay afterwards, may be better underſtood.

I do not perceive any ſuch *Connexion* between the Ideas of *Perception*, and *Will*, and thoſe of *Extention*, *Figure*, and *Motion*, that, where-ever the *former* are, there muſt the *latter* be alſo; nor, do I ſee any Reaſon, why *Perception*, and *Will*, are

not as eaſily believed to exiſt *ſeparately* from *Extenſion*, *Figure*, and *Motion*; as *Extenſion*, *Figure*, and *Motion* are, to exiſt *ſeparately* from *Perception*; and *Will*, only, becauſe *theſe* are *actually* perceiv'd ſo to exiſt, and we have not, yet, been *actually conſcious* of ſuch a ſeparate Exiſtence of *the other*. But this does not hinder but that *Perception*, and *Will*, *may ſo exiſt*, and have a *Subject*, or *Subſtance* of their own, *diſtinct* from that which ſupports theſe Qualities of *Extenſion*, *Figure*, and *Motion*.

If *Thinking*, and *Willing* were *common* to *every Being* that we knew, we could no more frame an Idea of a *pure material Subſtance*, exiſting without *theſe Qualifications*, than we can, now, of a *pure thinking Subſtance*, exiſting without *thoſe Qualities*, which we attribute to Body: but 'tis certain, from an *actual Separation* of *theſe different Ideas*, perceivable in *different Subjects*, that *ſome* of them may exiſt without *the other*, tho', without this *actual Separation*, we could not have been ſo *certain* of it; and, therefore, tho' *the other* have never yet been *perceived* to exiſt *ſeparately* from *theſe*, it does not follow from thence, that they *cannot* ſo exiſt: but, conſidering the vaſt diſtance that

there

there is between the *Natures* of the ſeveral *Ideas*, without any *conceivable Reſemblance*, or *Relation* to one another, 'tis *very probable*, that they do *ariſe* from *different Principles*, and are founded in *different Subjects*.

However, having no farther Certainty of it from *natural Reaſon*, (and I purpoſely wave all other Proof at preſent,) let us ſuppoſe, that *Perception* and *Will*, *Extenſion*, *Figure*, and *Motion*, have all the *ſame common Subject* to ſupport them, are *radically*, and *ultimately* founded in the *ſame Subſtance*, and iſſue from the *ſame Principle*; of which *Subject*, *Subſtance*, or *Principle*, we know nothing more, than that it is *ſomething*, which *ſuſtains* theſe different *Qualities*, or whatever elſe we call them, which could not *exiſt* of themſelves, *without it*: Suppoſing, I ſay, all this, 'tis ridiculouſly, [illegible], without any colour of Reaſon, inferred from hence, that, therefore, *Perception* and *Will* are only different *Modifications*, or *Diſpoſitions* of *Extention*, *Figure*, and *Motion*; or do, in ſome manner, or other, wholly *reſult* from them: For, why may not *diſtinct Qualities co-exiſt* together in the ſame *Subject*, without being derived

one from another? or, why ſhould *Perception*, and *Will*, be *Modifications* of *Extenſion*, *Figure*, and *Motion*, any more than *Extenſion*, *Figure*, and *Motion* are different *Modes* of *Perception*, and *Will?* I cannot ſee, what ground They can have to believe otherwiſe, who affirm, what we call the *Mind* or *Soul* of Man, to be nothing elſe but *Matter*, under a peculiar *Diſpoſition of it's Parts.*

But, that *Thinking*, and *Willing*, upon a Suppoſition, that they actually exiſt *in matter*, and *cannot* exiſt *without it*, are not, therefore, *Modifications*, or *Effects* of the *other Qualities* of *Matter*, which are in it, antecedently to the Addition of *theſe*, may be farther illuſtrated by this Inſtance.

Motion is ſomething *added* to the *original*, and *eſſential* Qualities of *Matter*; owes it's *Capacity of exiſting*, to it, and cannot exiſt, *without it:* and yet 'tis plain, that *Motion* is no *Modification*, or *effect* of *Solidity*, *Extenſion*, or *Figure*; which are every thing, that we conceive in *Matter*, before *Motion* is added to it; but is ſomething, in *its own nature diſtinct* from *all theſe*, and not *reſulting* from any conceivable Difference of them: So that it

does

does not follow that, becauſe *Matter* is *ſolid*, or *extended*, or of ſuch a figure, therefore it muſt be *in motion.*

And if this be true of *Motion*, it muſt be much more true of *Thinking*, and *Willing*. For that Idea we have of *Motion* does involve *Matter* in it; we had never known, what Motion was, had we not perceived ſomething that was *moved*; and we cannot perceive a thing, as *moved*, without perceiving it, as *extended* too; and *Extenſion* neceſſarily implies the *other eſſential Properties* of Matter: but I can form a Notion of *thought* and *Will*, and be conſcious of ſomething, which thinks, and *wills*, without having any Ideas, at the ſame time, of *Solidity*, *Extenſion*, *Figure*, or *Motion*; and, therefore, if *Motion* may be joyned to the other Qualities of *Matter*, without *reſulting* from them, tho' in the Idea, we have of it, it cannot be conceived, without them; 'tis *much more probable*, that *Thought*, and *Will*, may *co-exiſt* with *Motion*, and all the reſt of the *material Qualities*, without being the *effects*, or *product* of them, when they carry no Marks of ſuch an *Original* upon them, and, in their Conception, have no appearance of any

Re-

Relation to them. And, if it does not follow, that, becauſe *Matter* is of ſuch a *nature*, and ſo *modified*, therefore it *moves*; *much leſs* can it be inferr'd, that, becauſe *Matter* is ſo and ſo *diſpoſed*, and *moved*, therefore it *thinks*, and *Wills*.

This being premiſed, it plainly appears from hence, that 'tis *much more probable in Reaſon*, that *God* ſhould be the *only Eternal Being*, than that *Matter*, any way conſidered, ſhould be *co-eternal* with him: For, the *Notion* of *God* is *full* and *compleat*, without any *Conſideration* of *Matter*; and the *Addition* of the Idea of *Matter* to it, does not *add* any thing to the *Perfection* of the *Divine Being*.

The *Power of producing Matter, and Motion*, and of *forming* an *infinite variety of Beings* out of them, is indeed a *Perfection*, very worthy of *God*, and what we juſtly attribute to him: but the *actual Exiſtence* of any of theſe Beings does no way *heighten* the Idea we have of him; whom we conceive to be *as perfect in himſelf, before* their *Exiſtence, as after it*.

The *actual Communication* of ſome of his *Perfections* to a particular rank of his *Creatures*, and his *giving* them the *Uſe*

and

and *Enjoyment* of his *other Works*, do raiſe a new Idea of him in *them*, which they call by the name of *Goodneſs*; but this they look upon only as a *voluntary opening* and diſcloſing the Glory of his *original* Nature, and not a *neceſſary additional Advancement* of it.

It is, therefore, *moſt agreeable* to our *Reaſon*, and to all the Notions we have of the *Divine nature*, that *God* ſhould have *exiſted alone*, *from all Eternity*; and, in *time*, have *produced* the *World* and all things in it.

But, if any Man had *rather* believe, that *Matter at reſt*, or *Matter and Motion*, or the *preſent Frame of the World*, with the ſeveral kinds of beings in it, were *co-eternal* with *God*, he muſt, at the ſame time, hold, that, whatever was *co-eternal with God* did either ſubſiſt eternally *of its ſelf*, *diſtinctly* from, and *independently* of him;

Or, is really a *neceſſary* part of the *Divine nature*, and helps to make up the *Idea* of *God*;

Or, did *eternally proceed* from him, becauſe he had, *eternally*, an *effectual will to produce it*.

But,

But, the firſt of theſe Suppoſitions cannot be true: for neither *Matter* alone, nor *Matter and Motion*, nor the *preſent Conſtitution of things* can be eternal, *independently* of God; becauſe, (as has been fully proved already,) none of them could have *exiſted eternally, without a God.*

And, therefore, what ever is ſuppoſed to be *eternal*, which does not enter into the *Idea* we have given of *God*, muſt be taken into it; as *neceſſarily belonging* to the *Divine Nature*; or muſt be look'd upon, as the *free eternal effect* of his *eternal Will.*

Thus ſome have affirm'd, that the *World*, and *every thing* that we ſee, or know, is God:

Others, that all things *flowed from God:* by which Expreſſion, if they mean *neceſſary Emanation*, they muſt be all referred to his *Being*, and *Eſſence*; if *production*, to his *Will.*

So that, however we expreſs our ſelves upon theſe Matters, *every thing* that we can imagine, or frame any Notion of, muſt *be* either *God*, or, ſome way, *proceed from* him, be aſcribed to his *Nature*, or reckoned among his *Works.*

The *Inference* from all which is this; That 'tis *moſt rational* to think, that no more

more belongs to the Idea of God, than what we have before attributed to him; and that he did, *in time*, of his own free will, *produce every thing*, not contained in that Idea, even *original Matter* and *Motion*, as well as the *frame and Structure of the World*, and the *Variety* of *particular Beings* in it.

But, if any Man aſſerts the *Eternity* of *any of theſe*, together with *God*, in the full extent of that Idea which we have given of him; whether his Opinion be *true*, or *falſe*, it can make *no change* in our Thoughts, with regard to *Religion*: Becauſe, the *Idea* of God, being ſo far the *ſame here* as we have eſtabliſht it, the *ſame Conſequences* will every where flow from it; and the Aſſertors of any ſuch Opinion will bear the *ſame Relation* to *God*, and be under the *ſame Obligations*, with us, who differ from them, in *ſome other things*, relating to God; which, however held, have no other *Influence* upon us, than as we are obliged not to Entertain any *falſe Notions* of God, *willingly*, when we may have *better Information*: or, where we cannot, yet ſome *Opinions* may appear *more ſuitable* to our *Reaſon*, and, more for the *Honour of God* than

than others; which I take to be the preſent Caſe, and, therefore, ſhall wave any further Enquiry into theſe Matters, as having no proſpect of a Poſſibility of knowing any thing more about them.

Thus have I, with as much Brevity and Diſpatch as the Subject would allow, examined all the Accounts, which are, or can be given, of the *preſent Exiſtence* of things; and, from particular Obſervations upon each of them, (not all that might be made, but ſuch as I judg'd ſufficient for my purpoſe) have (I think) made it very evident, that there *muſt be a God*, or Being of ſuch a nature as I before deſcribed, who was the *true* and *only Cauſe*, or *Author* of *every thing* we ſee, or know, or has ever been, beſide him; and, that, without the Suppoſition of ſuch a Being, the World could not *poſſibly* have *ever exiſted*, as, we ſee, it does.

I ſhall now add ſome *general Reflections*, to ſtrengthen the Doctrine here maintained, concerning the *Original of the World*, and ſo conclude the Proof of a God.

That the World is, what we now perceive it to be, muſt be aſcribed either

to

to *Chance*, *Neceſſity*, or *Wiſdom*: but *Chance*, is *nothing*; *Neceſſity*, without a God, *unintelligible*; and, therefore, *Wiſdom*, or what is meant by it, *God*, who is a *wiſe Being*, *made* the *World*, and all things in it, in that *form*, and manner, which we now behold, and admire.

To ſay, that the World was *made by chance*, is, to ſay, that it was made, *we know not how*, *or without* any *Cauſe*; and is, in truth, to uſe Words, which have no determined Meaning.

There is no Man, who has made any Enquiries into the Nature of Things, but knows, that nothing, which before *was* not, can ever be, without owing its *Original* to ſome *real poſitive Being*, of *antecedent Exiſtence*. *Inadequate*, and *inſufficient Cauſes* are indeed often aſſigned for the *Production* of things; becauſe, being *next* to, and *immediately preceding*, the *Effects*, they are, *ſolely*, taken notice of, without any regard had to their being *Subordinate to*, or *Directed by* other Cauſes; and, oftentimes alſo, ſomething is thought to be the *next*, and *immediate Cauſe* of a thing, which hath no influence at all upon it: but, in both theſe Caſes, 'tis ſome *real*

Effi-

Efficiency, obſerved by us, that gives riſe to theſe Judgments; which are ſo far true, as they ſuppoſe the Effect to proceed from ſome *real Cauſe*, tho' there may be a Miſtake in attributing it to a *wrong one*, or to *one* that had only a *ſhare* in producing it; and, therefore, there muſt be *ſomething real* aſſign'd, which was *as much*, and *as properly*, the *immediate Cauſe* of the *meeting of the Parts* of Matter, in *order to make* a World, as the parts of Matter, *ſo met*, were the *Cauſe* of the *Production of the World*; which can be nothing elſe, but *ſuch* and *ſuch particular Determinations* of *Figure*, and *Motion*, in the ſeveral parts of Matter: but theſe muſt, either have been *eternal*, or have ſprung from certain *eternal fixt Rules*, *reſulting* from the *Natures* of *Matter*, and *Motion*; or have been impreſſed by a *divine Power:* in all which Caſes there can be nothing *caſual*, but every thing muſt have been *neceſſary*, or *providential*.

For, ſuppoſing the *whole Syſtem* of *Matter ſo* and *ſo figured*, and *moved*; we cannot conſider it as *indifferent* to *ſeveral* Effects, but *neceſſarily determined* to *ſome*, which muſt inevitably follow upon ſuch a *ſuppoſed Diſpoſition*, unleſs ſomething *extrinſical*

trinſical to *Matter* ſhould *reſtrain*, or *change* the *original Determination*: and if any thing, *extrinſical* to Matter, or, *beſides* Matter and Motion, be allowed, it muſt be *God*. But if there be *nothing elſe* exiſting beſides *Matter* and *Motion*, then are all the Effects reſulting from them *neceſſary*, becauſe, whatever *Diſpoſition*, or *Motion* of Matter we ſuppoſe, and *whenſoever*, in the whole extent of Eternity, we ſuppoſe it, every following *Effect muſt* have been what it *is*, and there could have been no other produced in the room of it.

The Reaſon, why certain Portions of Matter, *ſo* and *ſo figured* and *moved*, do not *always neceſſarily* produce the *ſame Effects*, is, becauſe, their *particular Determinations* are reſtrained, or over-ruled by the *neceſſary Impulſes* of *other extrinſical Matter*; or by the greater Power of the *Divine Will*: and, this being unperceiv'd by us, we look upon ſeveral of theſe *particular* Effects as *caſual*, which can, only, and, that very improperly too, *with reſpect to our Comprehenſion*, be ſtiled ſo; whereas *in reality*, *with reſpect* to the *univerſal Nature*, and *Efficiency* of things,

they muſt be either *neceſſary*, or *voluntary*.

But, if we conſider the *whole Frame* and Collection of things *together*, we cannot form any Idea of *Chance*, either *in the World as it now is*, or *in its original Formation*; unleſs we will be ſo ridiculous as to ſay, that *every thing* which *is*, is *caſual*; that every thing which *has been* from all Eternity *happen'd by chance*; and that it was *by chance* that *Matter* and *Motion* were *eternal*, or that *any thing exiſted* at all; *Chance* having the ſame Title to *all* theſe Effects as to *any one* of them.

I need not conſider the other Occaſion we take of forming this Notion of *Chance*, from the *Indifference* that we perceive oftentimes in our ſelves with regard to *ſeveral contrary* Actions, which makes our doing one thing rather than another, when the Mind ſeems alike diſpoſed to both, to be look'd upon as a *caſual Reſult*, rather than a *proper Effect*. This may be accounted for otherwiſe, by the *Preponderancy* of ſome *motive*, *determining* us to act *this* way rather than *another*; and the *ſeeming Indifference* may be ſhewed to have ſprung from our *Ignorance* of the whole Nature, and all the Conſequences

of

of the thing in queſtion, and the ſeveral Reaſons and ways of acting: but there is no occaſion for ſuch a Proof, becauſe, thoſe who ſay that the World was made *by chance*, cannot be ſuppoſed to uſe the Word in *this Senſe*, foraſmuch as they do not acknowledge, that *God*, or any *intelligent Being* was concern'd in the *Production* of it: and if they did, yet would they not entertain ſuch low and abſurd Notions of him, as to think, that ſome *Chance-Thought* or *Action* of *his* produced it.

'Tis plain then, that *Chance*, is nothing elſe but an *inſignificant Word*, and an *ignorant Pretence*, which, has no *Senſe*, or *Reaſon*, under it, and therefore, can give us no manner of light in our Enquiries into the *Nature*, and *Original* of things.

Neither will *Neceſſity*, which is the next thing to be conſider'd, give us much better Satisfaction: For, if we examine this Notion well, 'twill evidently appear, that there can be no *Neceſſity* for the *preſent Exiſtence* of the World, in the manner we behold.

For, nothing can be ſaid to be *abſolutely neceſſary*, but what 'tis altogether *im-*

poſſible ſhould be *otherwiſe*; but *impoſſible* it is not that the World ſhould *never have exiſted*, or that it ſhould *be deſtroyed* now it does exiſt; Becauſe it is not impoſſible but there may be a *Being*, of much greater Perfection and Power than the World, which could have *hindred* the World from *exiſting*, or can now *deſtroy* it.

But, if any Man ſhall ſay that he cannot conceive ſuch a Being, as could *hinder* Matter *from exiſting*, or *deſtroy* it now it does exiſt, becauſe, he cannot conceive a Power, of *making ſomething out of nothing*, or, of *reducing ſomething* to *nothing*, the laſt of which is here ſuppoſed, and the firſt muſt be allowed, if the World does not exiſt neceſſarily, but was made: If any Man, I ſay, ſhould object this, I anſwer that it ſeems to me *conceivable* enough from the *Idea* I have of *God*, that, what is here aſcribed to him, may fall within the compaſs of his *Power*; which, reaching to *all* things *poſſible*, that is, to all things which do not imply a *Contradiction*, may extend to the Acts of *Creation* and *Annihilation*; which, tho' the *manner* of the Performance be *incomprehenſible*,

prehenſible, cannot be proved to carry any *Contradiction* in them.

However, if there be thoſe who pretend that they cannot *comprehend* the *Poſſibility* of *theſe* Actions, yet, *this* is very *conceivable* by any Man, that there may be *ſome Being*, of ſo much *Perfection* and *Power*, that, tho' he could not *hinder Matter* from *exiſting*, or *reduce* it to *nothing* now it does exiſt; yet he might have *hinder'd* it from being put into any *Motion*, *Form*, or *Order*, and might have *continued* it in that State, or can *reduce* it now to a *confuſed*, *unmoving Chaos*, or *ſcatter* it into *innumerable incoherent Particles*. There is no manner of Difficulty for a Man to frame a Notion of theſe things, who has ſeen frequent Inſtances of the *ſame kind of Power*, in a *leſſer degree*, exerciſed by *Men*. And this is ſufficient to overthrow the *Neceſſity* of the *preſent Frame* and *Conſtitution* of things, which was the thing deſign'd.

If, therefore, the World, and all things in it, in the Condition we now behold them, do not ſubſiſt by a *neceſſity of Being*, nor are the *reſult of Chance*, it unavoidably follows, that they are the *Effect*, and

Product of Wiſdom, the *Workmanſhip*, and *Contrivance* of a *wiſe Agent*.

This is certainly the moſt *rational* Hypotheſis that can be deviſed, or maintained; for we, who eſpouſe this opinion, have *clear* and *diſtinct Ideas* of that *Power*, and *Wiſdom*, by which we explain the *Original* of Things; but thoſe who aſcribe the *Exiſtence*, and *Structure* of the World to any thing elſe, have no Ideas of what they aſcribe them to. No Man has any Notion of *Chance*, or *Neceſſity*, except he annexes the Idea of *Power* to them; and he can have no Idea of *Power* without *Knowledge*, all *Power* proceeding *originally* from *Mind*, which, by *Conſciouſneſs*, we are Senſible of; and we can frame no Notion of any other *Seat* or *Spring* of *Power* but this, and, therefore, we make ſome *Mind* or *intelligent Being* the *Author* of every thing, as being the *only conceivable Fountain* of all *Power*.

Our Notions of *Wiſdom*, *Contrivance*, and *Deſign*, are as *clear* as that of *Power*, and known the ſame way: And if Wiſdom be ever plainly diſcoverable in its *Works* and *Effects*, it is ſo in the *Frame* and *Conſtitution of the World*, and the ſeveral parts of it. If we have any reaſon to con-

conclude that *Towns* and *Cities* were *built*, and *Kingdoms*, and *Common-wealths* were *model'd*, by the *Thought* and *Contrivance* of *intelligent Beings*, we have much more Cauſe to believe that the *Univerſe* was *made*, *faſhion'd*, and *diſpoſed*, by the *Counſel* and *Wiſdom*, of ſome more perfect and capacious *Mind*; the Marks and Prints of *Wiſdom* being *plainer*, and *more legible* in the *Frame* and *Diſpoſition of the World*, than in any of the moſt admired *Works of Man*.

And, therefore, if we allow our ſelves to have any Ideas of *Power*, and *Knowledge*, we muſt confeſs, that *Power* is *inſeparable* from *Knowledge*; and, that there is no *Power*, but there is ſome *Knowledge commenſurate* to it, it being utterly inconceivable that any thing ſhould *be*, or be *made*, and there ſhould be no Being that *knows* how it came to *be*, or in what manner it was produced.

And this, I think is, of it ſelf, a ſure Ground of Belief; that *there is a God*, who was the Author of the World, and every thing in it, without carrying the Proof any higher; but, for the ſake of thoſe who will not be ſatisfied with *this*, I have given a *farther* Demonſtration of the

Being of God, not with any Hopes of convincing them, but to make it impoſſible for them to urge any thing to the contrary.

Thus have I finiſhed the *Proof of a God*, and (as I perſuade my ſelf) made it *very evident*, that there really *is ſuch a Being*, and that, what we call God, is a Being of *ſuch a nature* as I before deſcribed; who is veſted with all *thoſe Characters*, and *Properties*, which I there attributed to him.

Which Conſiderations, together with thoſe plain and eaſy Reflexions before ſuggeſted upon our ſelves, and our *own Nature*, if carefully attended to, will certainly convince us of the *Reality* of *all thoſe Relations*, which I have ſuppoſed between *God* and *Man*; and furniſh us with many *direct*, and *undeniable Arguments* of the *Truth*, and *Neceſſity* of Religion: which is the third Thing I propoſed, and the principal part of the Deſign which I am purſuing in this Diſcourſe.

III. From

III. From the Knowledge which I have ſhewn that we have, or are capable of having, concerning the *Humane*, and *Divine Natures*, I ſhall deduce a *poſitive* and *direct* Proof of *Religion*.

Religion, in ſhort, is, whatever we are *obliged to* by *God*. In order, therefore to prove that there is ſuch a thing as Religion, it muſt be ſhewn, that *Man* is *capable* of being obliged to *act* as he is directed; that *God* has a *Power* of obliging him to do what he commands; and that *Man* is *actually* under ſuch an Obligation, or that *God* does *actually will* and *require* ſomething of him.

Now 'tis plain to any Man who conſults himſelf, that he hath, in ſeveral caſes, a *Power of determining* himſelf to *act*, or *not to act*; and a *Power of acting, or not acting*, according to *ſuch Determination*; that he is *influenced* to *act*, ſeveral ways, by *different Motives*, and *Proſpects*; that he oftentimes ſuffers himſelf to be influenced by *certain Conſiderations*, which he *ought not* to have acted by, as he plainly perceives by *condemning himſelf* afterwards for what he has done; and that he often *neglects*, or *refuſes* to obey ſuch

ſuch Motives and Incitements to Action, which he himſelf Judges that he *ought* to have followed, by *Approving* of them both before, and after ſuch Neglect or Refuſal. From whence it evidently follows, that a Man *may be obliged* to act one particular way rather than any other; becauſe, there may be ſuch *Reaſons* and *Motives* propoſed to him for his acting *ſuch a way*, as, upon a juſt Ballance of them, with all the ſeveral Inducements, which can be offered for his acting any other way, he muſt acknowledge, *ought* to *determine* him; ſo that, ſhould he act *this way*, he muſt *neceſſarily approve himſelf*, and, ſhould he act *any other* way, he muſt *neceſſarily condemn himſelf*.

That Being, which hath a Power of offering ſuch Reaſons and Motives as theſe to any Man, may properly be ſaid to have a *Power of obliging* him to act as he ſhall direct.

And that *God* hath this Power, is very manifeſt, if we conſider, what it is that *influences* and *determines* us to *act*; which being nothing elſe but ſome kind of *Pain*, or *Pleaſure*, in *preſent*, or *in proſpect*; God, who can do all things poſſible, and, conſequently, who can put us into, and con-

continue us, to all Eternity, in a *ſtate* of *Pain* or *Pleaſure*, the greateſt of either kind which our Natures are capable of, can, by annexing theſe to different ways of acting, offer ſuch Motives to us, as, we ſhall be forced to acknowledge, *ought to determine* us to do what he commands; and therefore, *God can*, if he pleaſeth, *oblige* us to obey him.

The only Queſtion then is, Whether we are *actually* under ſuch Obligation? whether God hath given us any Laws, or Rules to walk by, and annexed *ſuch* different *Conſequences* to our Actions, according as we obey or diſobey him as, make it abſolutely *neceſſary* to our *Happineſs*, to conform to his Will?

But, before I enter upon the Reſolution of this Queſtion, I think it requiſite to give a fuller Account of the *Nature*, and *Ground* of what we call *Obligation*, or *Duty*, and to be more particular in explaining the *Power* and *Right of obliging*.

Now 'tis plain, from what has been already ſaid, That an *Obligation*, with reſpect to *Man*, is nothing elſe but ſuch a *Reaſon*, or *Motive*, as, when duly offered to him, *neceſſarily determines* him to

to *chuſe* one way of acting before another; and this *Reaſon*, or *Motive*, can be nothing elſe but a *greater degree* either of *Happineſs* to be obtained, or Miſery to be avoided by acting thus, than (all things conſidered) can be obtained, or avoided by acting *any other way*. Such a Reaſon, or Motive as this, does, in the ſtricteſt and moſt proper Sence of the Word, *oblige* us to act according to it; that is, we find our ſelves under a *neceſſity of* Submitting to it, or we are forced to acknowledge that we ought ſo to do, and while theſe thoughts are preſent to our Minds, we cannot poſſibly act otherwiſe.

There is no other *Notion* or *Ground* of Obligation imaginable: or if any other be pretended, it will upon Examination, be found to be ultimately reſolvable into this.

'Tis true indeed, we ſeldom go ſo far in our inquiries into theſe Matters, as to Trace the ſeveral Reaſons of our acting up to their *Original ſpring*; but are content to reſolve what we do into the *next* and *immediate* motives which determined us, and which, we took, upon publick Credit, to be Juſt and Sufficient grounds for

for us to act upon, without ever Examining, our ſelves, from whence their force is derived.

Thus for example; when we are asked why we did ſuch, or ſuch a thing; we think it a full anſwer to ſay; that we were obliged in *gratitude* to do it; or that the *Laws* of our Country injoined it; or that we did it in obedience to a *Parent*, or a *Governour*, or the like; but if it ſhould be further demanded of us, what obligation Gratitude lays upon us; what regard is due to the Laws of our Country; why Parents and Governours are to be obeyed; we ſhould be apt to look upon ſuch Queſtions as theſe as Captious and Impertinent, and not deſerving a ſerious return; becauſe we take all theſe Notions of Humane Duty to be ſo well ſettled, and agreed upon, that there can be no room for a Diſpute about them. But ſhould we urge the *Command of God* for what we did, we ſhould be aſtoniſhed to hear it asked, what ground there was for obeying God.

And yet, ſo it is, that, tho' the Reaſons here given for our Conduct have, (when truly alledged) that *direct* and *immediate* appearance of Certainty, in themſelves,

ſelves, that there is no need of a farther Proof of them, to any Man who judges ſoberly and fairly; yet there are thoſe to be found, to whom they do not appear ſo ſtrong and concluſive, as to command their Submiſſion to them. Theſe are they who endeavour all they can, to remove the ancient Landmarks and *Bounds of Duty*, and to take away all *Diſtinctions* of *Good* and *Evil*; who ſtrike at the *Foundations of Virtue and Religion*, and queſtion the very *Being* as well as *Authority of God*: and, to Satiſfie the unreaſonable ſcruples of theſe Men, 'tis neceſſary to ſhew that the Principles before mentioned, together with many others of the ſame kind, are all founded upon ſuch a Bottom as muſt be ſufficient to ſupport them, the Enemies of Religion themſelves being Judges.

The ſhorteſt therefore, and ſureſt way of convincing the moſt perverſe diſputers of this World, that they are obliged to perform all the particular Duties of Humane life required of them, is, to prove to them; that there is a *God* who hath annexed *exceeding Happineſs* to the *Practiſe*, and *extream Miſery* to the Neglect of thoſe things. For here they muſt ſtop, and

and they can have no further Queſtions to ask; it being utterly impoſſible for them to doubt whether they ſhould chuſe to be *Happy* rather than *Miſerable*; and perfectly abſurd to inquire why they ſhould ſeek their own Happineſs.

This is then, in reality, the *True* and *ultimate Ground* of *Humane Obligation*, tho' 'tis ſeldom that we have any occaſion to ſearch ſo deep for a Proof of the *common Rules* and *Principles of Morality*, and it would be an unneceſſary undertaking now, if we had not to do with ſuch Perſons as obſtinately ſtand out againſt all the uſual Methods of Reaſoning.

The *Nature* and *Ground of obligation in General* being thus fixed; what is meant by the *Right* and what by the *Power of obliging*, in what reſpect they are the ſame, or, at leaſt, only diſtinct Conceptions of the ſame thing, and in what reſpects they are different, will plainly appear, if we conſider the ſeveral Inſtances to which theſe Notions are applied.

All the Beings capable of *obliging*, or *being obliged*, are thoſe that we call *intelligent Beings*; which, as far as our Knowledge in theſe Matters reaches, are only *God*, *Angels*, and *Men*. Whe-

Whether there are any *Angels*, or *middle Natures* between *God* and *Men*, and how they are determined to act themſelves, or what influence they have upon other Beings, *natural Reaſon* does not *certainly* inform us: but, *in general*, with reſpect to *all* the *intelligent Beings*, which we can frame any Notions of, it may be affirmed, that *no* one has either a *Right* or *Power of obliging another* to act according to his directions, any farther than he hath a *Power of contributing to the Happyneſs, or Miſery* of that Being, which he undertakes to Govern.

Thus are we led to conclude by all that we know concerning God, and *ourſelves*;

For firſt, as to *God*: I am not able to comprehend, how he can lay Men under *an Obligation* of Living according to the Laws and Commandments he gives them, any other way than by *making them know*, that he hath it *in his Power* to render them *happy*, or *miſerable*, according as they *obey*, or *diſobey* him; and that he *will* certainly Reward or Puniſh them according to their Behaviour toward him.

'Tis not his great and ſupereminent

Power

Power in creating Men and giving them *Being*, which is, *ſolely in its ſelf*, the ground and foundation of his Title to their Obedience: This, if he had not alſo given them a *capacity of being happy* could never become a Reaſon or Motive of acting to them, and, conſequently, no Obligation could be founded upon it: For, were they made and ordained *to be miſerable*; and were they ſure that their *miſery* was to have no End, and would admit of no *abatement* or *increaſe*, by what means could the *Author of their Being oblige* them to act one way rather than another, when he could not offer any thing to them which would have any weight in determining them ſo to act? What, in this Caſe, could induce them to *obey God*, rather than to diſobey him, when 'tis certain that, which way ſoever they acted, they were not capable, either of the pleaſure of approving, or the pain of Condemning what they did, all manner of pleaſure, and all Acceſſion of Miſery, being, in the State of Mankind now ſuppoſed, utterly impoſſible. They might indeed, by an *over-ruling Power*, be *forced* to do what was commanded them: but this is not a *rational Obligation*, which is

acknowledged, and ſubmitted to, as *ſuitable* and *agreeable to Reaſon*, and performed with the *full Concurrence of the Will* of thoſe who obey it.

In vain, then, and very falſly, do ſome nice abſtracted Thinkers magnify the *Excellence* and *Perfection* of *pure Being*, or *Exiſtence*, even when joined with the *higheſt degree of Miſery*: a Moment's Experience would ſoon convince them, that, *to be*, was no otherwiſe the *Perfection* of a *rational Being* than as it included a *Capacity of being happy*: but if, after ſuch Experience, they ſhould ſtill think it *better* to *be miſerable*, than *not to be* at all; the *Satisfaction* of knowing themſelves *to be*, muſt out balance the other *Miſery* which they felt; and conſequently, God's *Right of obliging them* would then be *founded* in his *Power of making them leſs*, or *more miſerable*, by continuing, or taking away, that Satisfaction, which they enjoyed: which confirms the Truth of what I aſſert.

This will farther appear, if, in the next place, we conſider *that Right*, and *Power of obliging*, which *Men* have, or pretend to have over one another; for whatever

kind

kind or *extent* it be of, it is all *founded in*, and *commenſurate to*, their *power of contributing to the Happineſs, or Miſery* of one another.

Many times indeed it ſo happens, that ſome Men demand to be obeyed by others, and require them to live according to their Orders and Directions, when, at the ſame time, they neither have, nor ever will have, any Power to Reward the obedience, or to Puniſh the diſobedience, of thoſe upon whom they lay their commands; ſo, as to make it more for the intereſt of ſuch Perſons to obey than to diſobey them. Upon which account, it is thought that, in many Caſes, there may be a *Right of obliging*, where there is no *Power to oblige:* but without any Ground.

For, if there be a *God*, who will *judge* the Actions of Men, and will *give to every one according to his work*; and if the Perſons, requiring Obedience from others, are commiſſion'd by *him* to require it; then have they a *Power* as well as a *Right of obliging* them to it: becauſe there are ſuch *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*, annexed by *God* to the obedience, or diſobedience of thoſe who are under any

Authority derived from *him*, as are ſufficient to determine them to do what their reſpective *Governours* or *Maſters* require of them: and, conſequently, whoever are appointed by God to bear Rule over us, have a *certain Power of contributing to our Happineſs*, or *Miſery*, tho' it ſhould ſo happen that they cannot be the *immediate cauſes* of either *themſelves*.

But, if there be *no God*, then are there no Perſons *Commiſſion'd* or *Authoriſed* by *him* to command others; but whoever take upon them to give Laws to their Brethren uſurp upon the common Liberty, and Equality of Mankind; and have, in this Caſe, no more a *Right* than a *Power of obliging* thoſe, whoſe Intereſt it is not to obey them; as will more fully appear hereafter, under another Head.

Other Inſtances there are among Men, where the *Power of obliging* is, or may be exerciſed, *without the Right*; and that is, when ſome Men, by the Advantage of a Superiour *Skill* and *Strength*, do, *without* any *Authority from God*, command Obedience from others, upon the proſpect of great Rewards, and Puniſhments, in ſuch things, where the Perſons ſo commanded,

are

are left at Liberty by God to act either way, as ſhall ſeem to them beſt, or moſt for their Advantage *in this Life:* In which caſe, thoſe that preſcribe ſuch particular Actions to others, have a *Power of obliging* them to obey, becauſe they have a *Power of determining* them to *act*, by the Conſideration *of greater Happineſs* to be obtained, by their doing as they are directed, than could be hoped for, if they followed their own advice: but thoſe who pretend to ſuch an Authority have *no Right* to uſe that Power, they have, becauſe they are *themſelves* under *greater Obligations, with reſpect to God, not to employ it*, than *thoſe*, upon whom it is exerciſed, are, *with reſpect to them, to obey* it: but if there be no *God*, then is their *Power* their *Right*.

From all which it follows, that, wherever there is a *Right of obliging*, there is likewiſe a *Power of obliging*; and, where there is an *abſolute uncontroulable Power* of obliging, there is, for that very Reaſon, *a Right* alſo; but, where there is only a *ſubordinate dependent Power* of obliging, it may be exerciſed *without Right*, that is, *contrary to ſome Obligati-*

ons, which the Perſons, who exerciſe it, owe to a *Superiour Power*.

But here, by a *Right of obliging*, I would be underſtood to mean, *a Liberty of offering ſuch Motives and Conſiderations to rational Beings, as, when duly applied, will* neceſſarily *determine them to act accordingly, with the full Conſent, and* Approbation *of their Mind*; And not *a title to order and diſpoſe of them, and their Actions, by an irreſiſtible Force, according to the free and unlimited Pleaſure of that Being, to whom ſuch a Title is ſuppoſed to belong.*

How far it is conſiſtent with the Nature of *God* to order and diſpoſe of his *Creatures* thus, is no part of the preſent Enquiry; but that he hath *ſuch a Right* and *Power of obliging*, as I have explained, is ſufficiently proved from the neceſſary *Attributes of God*, before ſpecified; and from the *Nature* and *Ground* of all *Obligation*, of which I *have* here given a particular account.

Whether God hath a Right and Title to our Obedience upon any other Foundation but that of his *Power to make us happy*; whether it be poſſible for Man to act voluntarily upon any other Reaſon or Motive

Motive but that of *his own Happineſs*; and, whether *Happineſs* be the *ultimate End* of all our *Actions*, and the *ultimate Ground* of all *Obligation*, or only a *ſubordinate*, but *neceſſary* and *inſeparable* Conſideration in every thing we do, if, what I have already ſaid upon theſe Matters, does not ſatisfy, I ſhall no farther diſpute: becauſe I am very well aſſured, that, whatever other Grounds or Motives for our Obedience to God may be imagined by ſome, who pretend to act upon more *noble* and *diſintereſſed* Principles than that of their own Happineſs; 'tis impoſſible to perſuade a Man, who does not yet believe any Religion at all, to become religious, except it can be plainly, or probably, at leaſt, made out to him, that he ſhall better his Condition by it. This I am ſure is the only Argument which can prevail upon an Unbeliever to *embrace Religion*; and whoever fairly conſults himſelf, will find, that he neither *does*, nor *can* act upon any *other* ground.

It muſt be confeſſed, indeed, that, we often act without knowing, or conſidering what the Conſequences of our acting will be; and we are ſo made and diſpoſed by nature that we readily acknow-

ledge our ſelves obliged to ſubmit to the Will and Commands of God, *without any expreſs Conſideration of future Happineſs*, to be obtained by our Obedience: but, on the other ſide, it muſt be owned too, that, if it could be evidently prov'd to us, that *Miſery* would be the *certain Conſequence* of thoſe Actions, which, upon the firſt View, we thought our ſelves obliged to, we ſhould then be forced to acknowledge, that we were miſtaken in our firſt Judgments, and that it would be more reaſonable for us to act any *other way*, which, upon new and better Proof, we were aſſured, would be *more for our Happineſs*.

Theſe Things being premiſed, I return to the main Queſtion, Whether we *are actually under any Obligations to God*, or, (which is the ſame thing, in other terms,) Whether *there be any ſuch thing as Religion?* And, in this manner, I ſhall prove that there is.

Firſt, I ſhall ſhew, that there is *ſuch a particular way of acting*, ſuch *a courſe of Actions*, or *Scheme* and *Model of living*, which whoever duly and fairly reflects upon,

on, will be *forced to acknowledge*, that, if he did *live* after That manner, he ſhould *approve himſelf* for ſo doing, and if he *lived otherwiſe*, he ſhould *condemn himſelf* for it; and that he who finds himſelf neceſſarily determin'd to approve ſuch a particular way of living, and to condemn the contrary, *muſt acknowledge* that he *ought or is obliged to act accordingly*. From whence I ſhall draw this Inference, that, all things conſidered, it muſt be *more for his Happineſs* to act thus than otherwiſe, becauſe, if it were not, he would not be under a neceſſity of Judging as he does. And therefore, he *is truly and really obliged to act* as he *judges he ought to act*.

Secondly, I ſhall prove, that *God*, who was the Author of our Being, *gave us ſuch a Nature*, by which we are neceſſarily determined to judge after ſuch a manner, for this very *End*, that we ſhould exerciſe and employ all the *Faculties* and *Powers*, he has furniſhed us with, ſuitably hereunto: From whence I infer, that, what *our Reaſon* tells us *ought to be done*, that we are *commanded by God* to do; and, therefore, what *God* has made to appear *reaſonable* or *unreaſonable*, and what he has diſpoſed us to approve or condemn, will ac-

accordingly conduce to our *Happineſs* or *Miſery*, and upon that account are we *obliged* to do the one, and avoid the other. And that God purpoſely created us after ſuch a manner, with a Deſign to oblige us to ſuch and ſuch Performances, I ſhall farther endeavour to ſhew, not only from the *general Conſideration of the Make and Nature of Man*, but from *many other Tokens and Indications* of ſuch an End, or Deſign, plainly viſible in the *World*.

Thirdly, I ſhall *poſitively* and *directly* prove from the *Nature of Religion it ſelf*, that a *Regular Practice of all thoſe Duties or Obligations*, of which it conſiſts, would certainly conduce to the *greateſt Happineſs*, that Man is capable of, conſidered only in *his preſent Condition*, as included within the Bounds of *this Life*.

Fourthly, I ſhall ſhew, that the *Defect of ſuch a Practice*, and the *Conſequences* of that defect, do neceſſarily lead us to the Acknowledgment of ſuch a *future State*, as is ſufficient to determine us to prefer one particular way of acting before another, upon *ſuch Reaſons* and *Motives*, that is, *ſuch Degrees of Happineſs* and *Miſery*, than

than which we are ſure *greater*, and *more powerful*, cannot be offered to us.

From all which Conſiderations, the *Certainty* and *Neceſſity* of *Religion* will be plainly and fully evinced.

1. Firſt then, I am to ſhew, that there is *one particular way of acting*, which we are *neceſſarily determined* to *prefer* to *any other*; ſo that, upon a clear and impartial View of pure natural Reaſon only, we cannot but thus acknowledge, that what we prefer that we *ought*, or are *obliged to do*, and whatever is contrary to it that we *ought*, or are *obliged*, *not to do*; and conſequently, that we are *really obliged to act* according to ſuch Judgments, becauſe it muſt, in the iſſue, be *moſt for our Happineſs* ſo to act.

That there are ſome *Natural Notions* of *Good and Evil*, *Right and Wrong*, or ſome ſuch *certain Diſtinctions*, *reſulting from* the *Natures*, and *Relations* of things, as cannot be altered, or deſtroyed by any arbitrary Agreement or Inſtitution whatſoever; and that theſe Notions are perceivable, by the *bare uſe of our Reaſon*, the

the ſame way that any other part of our Knowledge is, has been conſtantly owned by the *greateſt* and *wiſeſt part* of Mankind, however they may have differ'd in aſſigning, *which they were*, and *what were the true Grounds and Foundations* of them.

Now, to put theſe Matters beyond all reaſonable doubt, and to cut off all occaſion of Conteſt concerning them, I only deſire this may be granted me, That there are ſome things ſo *clearly*, and *fully* propoſed to the Mind, that a Man cannot *deny*, or *with-hold* his *Aſſent* to them; and that, wherever this happens, there is the *greateſt Certainty* we are capable of: For then it muſt be granted alſo, that we may be as certain, that ſuch or ſuch Things *ought*, or *ought not to be done*, as that ſuch or ſuch Things *are*, or *are not* after ſuch a manner.

For Example; I may be as fully ſatisfied, that I *ought* to deſire, and endeavour after my own Happineſs, and that I *ought* not to take away the Happineſs of another Man, when I know I ſhall not add to my own by it, as I can be of the *Truth* of theſe Propoſitions; that *every thing* which *moves* is; that *the ſame thing*

thing cannot poſſibly *exiſt, and not exiſt, at the ſame time*; that is, in both theſe Inſtances, the things aſſented to, have an equal *Suitableneſs* or *Agreeableneſs to to our Reaſon*, and the like *Force* or *Violence* would be offered to our Underſtandings by a Denial of either: Which is the only *Ground*, and Standard of *Certainty* aſſignable by us.

Several *other moral Propoſitions* might be brought, which carry ſo clear and full a *Conviction* along with them, as is not to be over-ruled by any after Conſiderations: But the *common Rules* and *Maxims of Morality*, which are look'd upon as Laws of Nature, are not *ſo general* as *thoſe* before inſtanced in, nor have, in all reſpects, the *ſame degree of Certainty* belonging to them; but what they are, how they are known, and how far they partake of *Certainty* and *Evidence*, I ſhall now give a ſhort Account, and from thence ſhall prove, that we are *neceſſarily determined* to *aſſent* to, and *approve theſe alſo*, and to *condemn*, and *deny* the *contrary* of them; and, conſequently, that we have all the Reaſon in the World to believe, that it will conduce more to our

Hap-

Happineſs, to act up to theſe Principles, than to live in oppoſition to them.

The *higheſt* and *moſt general* moral Duties commonly inſtanced in, are ſuch as theſe; That *God is to be worſhipped*; that *Parents are to be obeyed*; and that *all other natural and civil Relations are proportionably to be reſpected*; that *we ought to abſtain from all ſorts of Intemperance and Exceſs*, and *to provide all things neceſſary for the continuance of our Life*; that *we ſhould not do any other Man an Injury*; *but ſhould contribute all we can to the Happineſs of Mankind, and more particularly*, to the Welfare and Support of *that Society we* belong to.

Now theſe, and ſuch like Propoſitions as theſe, are *known*, or *found out*, by *the Uſe* and *Employment of our natural Faculties*, in the ſame way that all other Truths are; that is, Men are *taught* the *Ideas* which theſe Terms belong to, or *get* them by their *own Obſervation*, and then, by *comparing* them together, they immediately acknowledge ſuch or ſuch a *Relation* between them, without being influenced by *any other Motive* ſo to judge but what reſults from the *Things themſelves*.

The

The *Relations* indeed of *moral Ideas*, as well as the *Ideas themſelves*, are, moſt of them, *learnt* from others firſt, before we are capable of finding them out our ſelves: but this is no more an Argument, that our Aſſent to ſuch kind of Propoſitions is only the *Effect of Education*, and, conſequently, a *meer Prejudice*, and no right Judgment; than it would be an Argument, to prove, that all the *Mathematical Knowledge* which a Man hath, is nothing elſe but a *Set of falſe Notions*, thruſt upon his Underſtanding by *Education*, becauſe he happen'd to be taught the firſt Grounds and Elements of this Science, while he was young, before he was capable of finding them out by his own Obſervation: for, when we *afterwards* come to review the *moral Knowledge* we got, whilſt we were Children; let us be never ſo jealous over our ſelves, and let us take all the Care we can to deliver our ſelves from the *Prejudices of Education*, we ſhall ſtill adhere to, and be farther ſatisfied of, moſt of thoſe Truths which we were then taught; as is ſufficiently proved by the Experience of ſeveral, who being Religiouſly Educated, have endeavoured afterwards to diveſt their Minds

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of all thoſe ſound Principles they had been taught, and yet have found the truth too hard for them. The Certainty and Impartiality of whoſe Judgment, has been ſtrengthen'd by the joint Aſſent of ſeveral of a *contrary Education*; who being looſely, or Ignorantly bred, have, upon ſober and mature Reflection, acknowledged the Power of Religion.

And, for a farther Illuſtration of this Point, ſhould we ſuppoſe a Perſon *entirely ignorant* of all ſuch Matters, but *capable* of underſtanding them, when propoſed, and ſhould one of theſe *moral Rules* or *Maxims* be *barely explained* to him, without any Reaſons offered to *move* or *incline* his Aſſent either way; 'tis very difficult to imagine, how *he* could judge otherwiſe than *we* do.

As for Example: Suppoſe ſuch a Perſon were juſtly inform'd concerning *his own Nature*, and the *Nature of God*, and what was meant by *Worſhip*, and by all the *Notions contrary to it*; and he were ask'd, which he ſhould rather do, *perform ſuch Acts* as would expreſs this Worſhip, or *neglect*, *ſlight*, and *omit* them, or elſe *ridicule*, *diſhonour*, and *blaſpheme* that Being which we call *God:* or ſuppoſe, he were

were told, what a *Parent* was, and that *ſuch a Perſon* was *his Parent*, and that he himſelf was ſenſible of a great many Kindneſſes which he had received from him; and it were propoſed to him, after a due Explication of what was meant by theſe things, either to *murder* him, or to *defend* him from ſome imminent Danger without any hazard to himſelf, or to *ſtand ſtill* and do neither; who is there that can doubt whether, in *theſe Caſes*, fairly propoſed and ſtated, ſuch an *unprejudiced* Perſon as this would not chuſe to *worſhip his God*, and *defend his Parent?*

We have therefore ſufficient *Reaſon* to conclude that *moral Truths* concerning humane *Actions* are *knowable the ſame way* that all *other Truths* are, which terminate *in Speculation* only; and that Men know *more*, or *fewer* of them, according to the different *Capacity*, and *Application* of thoſe, who are employed, in theſe Enquiries.

And, as to the *Certainty* and *Evidence* of ſuch Truths as theſe; 'tis, as in all other kind of Knowledge, *greater*, or *leſs*, according as the *Propoſitions* conſidered are *nearer* to, or *farther* from the *firſt general Axioms*, or *Rules of Morality*, from

whence all the reſt are deduced; ſuch as are thoſe before mention'd, of ſeeking *our own Happineſs; and not taking away another Man's, when we cannot add any thing to our own by it*; and ſuch as immediately follow from hence, as, that *we ought to prefer a greater Good, or Pleaſure, to a leſs; a leſſer Evil, or Pain, to a greater*; and the like: The *Evidence* of which is as great, as that of any *Mataphyſical*, or *Mathematical* Axioms whatever.

But the *other moral Duties* which I had occaſion to inſtance in, concerning the *Worſhip of God, Obedience to Parents*, &c. which are *leſs general*, have not the *ſame degree of Evidence*; becauſe the *Certainty* and *Neceſſity of the Connexion* of thoſe Actions with our own *Happineſs*, (which is the original Foundation of all Action and Duty,) is not ſo *clearly diſcoverable*, that we immediately perceive it; but the *Evidence* of thoſe common Principles and Rules of Morality which I have mentioned before, is ſo great, that, when they are fairly offered to the Underſtanding, *without any Conſideration of our own Happineſs* being concern'd in them; (if this may be ſuppoſed; as, in ſeveral Inſtances, no doubt, it may,) we *never refuſe our Aſ-*

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ſent to them: and, if ſo, there can be no reaſon aſſign'd, why we ſhould judge wrong, when there is nothing ſuppoſed to determine the Mind either way, but the *Nature of the Ideas themſelves* which we judge of; and, when *all Men*, in the ſame Circumſtances, *conſtantly* judge alike.

But, the truth of all theſe moral Principles depending intirely upon the relation which they bear to our Happineſs, we are farther to examine, what ground there is to believe, that acting up to theſe Principles is the ſureſt way to make our ſelves Happy.

Now the Reaſon we have to conclude that there is a *Connexion* between *ſuch moral Actions* and *our Happineſs*; and that the *Performance of thoſe Actions*, which, without any *viſible relation to our Happineſs*, we *approve*, will be attended with *more Pleaſure*, or *leſs Pain* than *ſuch Omiſſions*, or *Actions*, which, without any *proſpect of Miſery*, we *condemn*; the reaſon, I ſay, we have, thus to conclude, is this: we find our ſelves under an *abſolute neceſſity* of *deſiring*, and *endeavouring after our own Happineſs*, and every thing which we know tends to it; and of *flying*, and *avoiding*, whatever we apprehend

may *leſſen*, or *take it away*, or put us into a *contrary State* of *Miſery*: we find alſo, that *Pleaſure*, and *Pain*, *Happineſs*, and *Miſery*, are the *only Principles*, and *Motives* of *Action*; and the obtaining the one, and avoiding the other, the *only Ends* of all Endeavour and Purſuit: and therefore, we cannot conceive it poſſible, that Beings ſo made, of *ſuch* a *Nature* and *Conſtitution* as this, ſhould be alſo contrived after ſuch a manner as to be *neceſſarily determined* to *approve thoſe Actions*, and to *judge* themſelves obliged *to do* them, which would tend to their *Miſery*, and to *condemn thoſe Omiſſions*, and *Performances*, and *judge* that they *ought not* to be guilty of them, which would procure their *Happineſs*.

Except then it can be proved from *Reaſon*, or it be ſome *other way* diſcoverable, that *acting according* to theſe moral Rules will certainly be attended with *more Miſery*, or *leſs Happineſs*, than *acting againſt them*; the *preſent Approbation* of our Judgment is a ſufficient Argument, that the *Obſervance of them* will conduce *more* to our *Happineſs*, than the *Neglect*, or *Violation* of them: and if it be impoſſible to prove the contrary, as I think it

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is, and as it will plainly appear to be hereafter, when I come to consider a *future State*, then are we *necessarily determin'd* to make *such Judgments* concerning our Actions, as I have mention'd: and, if we are necessarily determin'd to judge thus, we have the *same*, or *very near* the same *Reason* to conclude, that the *Observation of such moral Rules*, or *such a particular way of acting* as our *Reason approves* will contribute *more* to our *Happiness* than *that* which it *condemns*; and, consequently, that we are *obliged* so to act; as we have to conclude, that what we are *necessarily determined* to give, or refuse *our Assent to*, should be *true*, or *false*, accordingly.

For the *original Frame* and *Constitution of the Mind*, being the *only Standard* of *Happiness* as well as *Truth*, and the Mind being *as capable of Happiness*, as *Truth*; (nay, if these can be separated, and there be any Precedence of one to the other, being made *first* and *principally* for *Happiness*) there is as *much ground* to suppose, that Men are not deceived when they are *necessarily determined to Judge*, that such a thing *ought*, or *ought not* to be done, as when they are determined to judge, that

ſuch a thing *is*, or *is not*: and, if ſo, then, conſequently, ſuch a thing as they have thus neceſſarily judg'd, ought, or ought not to be done, will *as certainly* tend to their *Happineſs*, or *Miſery*, accordingly, if they *act* agreeably to the ſeveral Judgments they have made; for, otherwiſe, they would have been deceived in *ſo judging*: and, when the *Mind* is no other way concern'd in *any thing elſe* than as it has a *relation to its ſelf*, and has nothing to do to *know* any further, why ſhould not it judge as truly and certainly of the *Suitableneſs*, and *Unſuitableneſs*, of *other* things, *to its ſelf*, as it does of their *Agreement*, and *Diſagreement*, among *one another*?

Since therefore theſe *general Principles*, or *Rules of humane action*, which are commonly lookt upon as the firſt *Foundations* of all *Morality* or *Duty*, are found ſo very agreeable to our pureſt and moſt impartial Reaſon, that, upon a bare propoſal of them, without any *perceivable relation to our Happineſs*, they *command* our *Aſſent*, and *Approbation*, and we *cannot but acknowledge*, that, what we *approve* that we *ought to do*, and what we *condemn* that *we ought not to do*, it may, I think,

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be very fairly inferr'd from hence, that it would conduce *more* to our *Happineſs* to act *according to* them, than to act *otherwiſe*; and, conſequently, that we are *really*, and *effectually* obliged, in the full extent and force of the Word, to a ſtrict and careful Obſervation of theſe Meaſures, in the whole Courſe of our Lives.

From all which it plainly appears, that the *Certainty* of *theſe moral Axioms* or *Propoſitions*, which I have placed in the *ſecond* rank, falls *very little* ſhort of the Evidence of thoſe *firſt irreſiſtible Judgments*, or rather *Impreſſions* concerning our *own Happineſs*, mentioned before: for *theſe* latter are known *immediately* by their own light, as the former are; and, if it does not preſently appear to us, with the ſame clearneſs, that ſuch Actions as are agreeable to theſe moral Rules, have a neceſſary Connexion with our Happineſs; yet, that there is ſuch a Connexion between them, is, in the *higheſt degree that can be probable*. And this is the leaſt, that can be inferred, from what has been alledged, upon this Head; and I am very cautious of laying more ſtreſs upon any

Argument than it will unqueſtionably bear.

2. The next Step I am to make in the Proof of *Religion*, is, to ſhew, that, what our *Reaſon approves*, or *condemns*, and tells us that we *ought*, or *ought not to do*, that we are *commanded* to *do*, or *not to do*, by God himſelf, who gave us *ſuch a Nature*, by which we are *neceſſarily determined* to *judge*, and to be *affected*, after *ſuch a certain manner*; for this End, and with this Deſign that we ſhould *act accordingly*; of which *End*, and *Deſign* he has given us ſeveral *Tokens*, and *Indications*: which is a farther Confirmation, that it is *more for our Happineſs, to obſerve* theſe Meaſures *of acting*, than *not*; and conſequently, that *we are obliged by God* to obſerve them.

That we received our *Beings*, together with all the *Powers*, *Capacities*, and whatever elſe belongs to them, from *God*, is very evident from the Account before given of the *Divine Nature*; aad therefore, when we are *neceſſarily determined* to *judge*, or to *be affected*, after ſuch a manner, that 'tis plainly out of our Power

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to judge, or to be affected otherwiſe, we muſt conclude, that ſuch a *Determination* is founded in our very *Frame* and *Make*, and, conſequently, is the *Work of God*; who, being an *intelligent* and *wiſe* Being, muſt be ſuppoſed to order every thing he makes to ſome *End:* and, there being no End which he can be ſuppoſed to deſign any thing for, but that which it is capable of, and which it is peculiarly fitted to attain; what Reaſon can be given, why we ſhould be *capable* of *ſuch Actions*, and *peculiarly diſpoſed* to them, by a *neceſſary Approbation* of them, if it were not *deſigned* by *God* that we ſhould *act* accordingly?

And, farther, Since, by our very *Nature* and *Conſtitution*, we find our ſelves *irreſiſtibly determined* to ſeek, and endeavour after Happineſs, and to avoid Miſery; we have all the reaſon in the World to conclude, that *Happineſs* is the *ultimate End* of our Being, and all our Actions: and, therefore, *God*, who made us after this manner, having alſo made it neceſſary for us to approve ſuch Actions, and to judge them fit to be done; and to condemn others as not fit to be done; we cannot conceive it *poſſible*, that he ſhould

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make it neceſſary for us to *aim at Happineſs*, in all that we do, and yet at the ſame time, ſhould *make it neceſſary* for us to *approve* ſuch Actions, and to *judge our ſelves obliged to do* them, as *would not* tend to our *Happineſs:* for this is to *deſign*, and *determine* us to a certain *End*, and, at the ſame time, to *make it neceſſary* for us to *approve* ſuch *means* as are *contrary to it*, and to *condemn* ſuch as would *lead* us thither; which is a perfect Contradiction to all the notions we have of a wiſe Being, and *cannot* be ſuppoſed of *God*.

As therefore we have reaſon to be throughly ſatisfied, that, what we neceſſarily judge *ought*, or *ought not to be done*, muſt be in *reality* what we have judg'd it to be; becauſe it is impoſſible to conceive, that we ſhould be *ſo diſpoſed*, with relation to *our own Happineſs*, as to be under a *neceſſity of being miſtaken*, in the *cleareſt* and *moſt immediate Perceptions*, which we are capable of, concerning it; ſo, likewiſe, when we conſider our ſelves, as *made* and *contrived* by *God*, we are *farther*, and *more directly* convinc'd of the truth of all thoſe things which we find our ſelves neceſſarily determined to aſſent to; becauſe we are fully aſſured from the

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Nature of *God* that we *cannot be deceived* by *him*, and, consequently, that we *are not mistaken* in any of those Judgments which *we are necessarily determined* to make, when it is *God* that *determines* us.

But, if any Suspicion of a Mistake could be entertained, there seems to be less ground for it in those Judgments, wherein *our Happiness* is *immediately* concern'd, than in the Judgments we make upon things which have *no relation to us:* for 'tis more reasonable to think, that *God* should make us after such a manner, as to leave us under a necessity of Judging *wrong*, in Matters, where the Consequences would be the same to us, whether we *judg'd right*, or *not*; than to imagine, that he should *purposely determine* us to judge wrong, where *Happiness*, and *Misery*, depend upon our Judgment.

Thus it appears, that *God* did *design* to oblige us to such a particular way of acting, or living, from the *general Consideration of the Nature of Man*; whereby he is *necessarily determined to approve* some Actions, and to *condemn* others, and to judge thus of himself, that he *ought to do* what he so approves, and that *he ought not to do* what he so condemns: and, therefore, we are

obliged

obliged to obey the *Commands of God*, and *our Nature*, and to purſue our own Happineſs, by the Directions which God hath given us, and in the Way and Method which he hath pointed out to us.

But, beſides the expreſs Judgment of our *Reaſon*, which he has ſet as a certain unerring Guide to lead us to Him and Happineſs, he hath given us ſeveral *other Tokens and Indications* of his Deſign, and our Duty, both in the *Frame*, and *Diſpoſition* of our *Minds*, and in the *Oeconomy* and *Conſtitution* of *Humane Society*.

And, firſt, as to the *Frame* and *Diſpoſition of our Minds*; he hath not only given us ſuch *Capacities*, and *Powers*, whereby we are enabled to know, and perform ſuch Actions as he requires of us, but he hath made us ſenſible of all our Obligations, by giving us ſuch *Inclinations*, and *Propenſions* to thoſe particular Actions, which he deſign'd to oblige us to, that, as ſoon as ever any Occaſion offers it ſelf, we immediately cloſe with it, ſo that the Action prevents all the Exerciſe of our Reaſon, or at leaſt is ſo quick, that we are not ſenſible of any antecedent

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Judgment, or Deliberation concerning it.

Thus, upon the receipt of any conſiderable Kindneſs, we preſently find our Souls readily diſpoſed to all the Acts of Love, and eſteem we are capable of; and, we immediately break out into all the external Actions that are any ways expreſſive of a grateful Senſe of Mind, *without conſidering*, that this is a likely way of procuring more Advantage to our ſelves, by engaging the good Opinion of ſuch as are Witneſſes of thoſe Returns we make. So, in like manner, when by Reaſoning, Information, or any viſible Indications of Power, we are induced to believe that ſuch or ſuch a Being is able, at his Pleaſure, to contribute very much to our Happineſs, or Miſery, we are *immediately conſcious* of all the different Sentiments of Hope, Fear, and Reverence; and are under a Diſpoſition to do what we think moſt agreeable to the Will of ſuch a Being; and our outward Behaviour is ſuitable to theſe inward Sentiments, *without any expreſs Conſideration*, that we ſhall thereby recommend our ſelves to this Being, and diſpoſe him to make uſe of his Power

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in our Favour, and not to our Diſadvantage.

Now 'tis plain, that, in both theſe Caſes, our Actions are not the *Effects of pure Reaſon*; tho', upon Examination, they are found to be exactly *agreeable to it*: for, beſides that, we do not, immediately perceive a neceſſary connexion between ſuch Actions and our own Happineſs; nor upon the ſtricteſt Obſervation of what paſſes within us, are ſenſible, of thoſe Steps, and Degrees, which we are conſcious of, in all manner of *reaſoning*: beſides all this, I ſay, if we acted by *reaſon only*, what need would there be of thoſe *previous Sentiments*, we feel; when we might perform all the *outward Actions* that were proper, upon a *bare rational Proſpect* of the Advantages, which we were likely to gain by them: but, if we look into our ſelves, we ſhall be convinced, that we *cannot help having* thoſe *Sentiments* which we feel upon ſuch Occaſions; that we do *not reaſon* our ſelves into them; and, if, by the Unhappineſs of our Temper, or any other way, we ſhould want theſe Sentiments of Gratitude, Reverence, or the like, we ſhould find ſome difficulty in reaſoning

ning our ſelves into the *ſame outward Behaviour*, as would have followed, if we had been *ſo affected*; and, tho' we were never ſo well convinced, that *our Happineſs* was really concern'd in ſuch a Behaviour, all our Actions would come *ſlower*, be performed with *more Conſtraint*, and *leſs Conformity* to one another, than if they had proceeded from a *lively natural Senſe*, till *Habit*, had enabled us to act with greater Eaſe and Diſpatch.

And thus we ſhould find our ſelves *originally made* and *diſpoſed*, with reſpect to all the *general Duties* of *Morality*, and *Religion*, if we entred upon a particular Examination of our *whole Frame* and Conſtitution: from whence we may conclude, that theſe *natural* and *original Inclinations*, and *Propenſions* to ſome Actions, and *Reſtraints from*, and *Averſions to others*, which we *feel* in our ſelves, without being conſcious of any *previous Deliberation* concerning the *Reaſonableneſs*, or *Unreaſonableneſs* of what we do; or, which, after Judgments of this Nature made, we look upon, as certain *Motions* of the Soul, carrying us on to act according to ſuch Judgments, with more *Eaſe*, *Quickneſs*, and *Application* of *Mind*,

Mind, than we ſhould have done, upon the *bare Conviction of our Reaſon*, without them: All theſe *Diſpoſitions*, I ſay, and *Sentiments* of the Soul, being *given us by God*, and *aſſiſting us, conformably* to the Dictates of our *Reaſon*, in diſcharging what we call the *Duties of Religion*; we have ſufficient Cauſe from hence to conclude, that *God* did *deſign* us for the *Practice of ſuch Duties*, and conſequently, that an *obedient Compliance* with this Deſign will contribute *more* to our *Happineſs*, than our *Diſobedience* can; which is a *farther* Proof, that *we are actually under Obligations to God*, or that *there really is ſuch a thing as Religion.*

Which *Obligations*, together with *God's Right of obliging*, we are conſtantly put in mind of by the *Oeconomy* and *Conſtitution* of *Humane Society*, and the ſeveral Relations ariſing from thence.

The *different kinds* of *Government*, and *Subjection*, to be found among Men, are the *chiefeſt Marks* and *Characters*, by which they are diſtinguiſh'd from one another in *Society*; theſe take up a large ſhare in their Thoughts and Diſcourſes,

courſes, and a great part of their Actions are influenc'd and determined by the Notions and Opinions they have of them: from whence we are led to acknowledge, that we are under *higher Obligations* of Obedience to *God* than we can be to any *humane Governour* whatſoever: for, whether we conſider our ſelves as *Servants*, *Children*, or *Subjects*, or any other way *inferiour* to others; whatever Reaſons are alledged for *our Duty* and Obedience to *Maſters*, *Parents*, or *Princes*, or for *their Right of commanding us*, will conclude *more ſtrongly* upon us, when we conſider our ſelves *with Relation to God*.

All the *Reaſons* which are given for our *Obedience* to *Men*, and for *their right of obliging* us, are *Power*, *Goodneſs*, and *Property*. When a Perſon has a *Power* of contributing to my *Happineſs*, *or Miſery*, and I do, ſome way or other, *belong to* him, ſo as to be call'd *his*, I look upon my ſelf as *obliged to obey* him, or to act according to his Will; and if, beſides his having this *Power and Property*, I conſider him as *more inclinable* to do me *good*, than *hurt*, I conceive my ſelf un-

der *higher Obligations* of Obedience to him.

But now *God* hath *all theſe Titles* to our Obedience in the *higheſt degree poſſible*; for, by giving us our intire Being, and every thing that belongs to our Nature, 'tis plain, that he hath, not only, a *greater Power of contributing to our Happineſs*, or *Miſery* than any Man can have, but alſo, a *greater Property* in us, by this *Act* of *Creation*, or *Production*, than can accrue to any Man by *Conqueſt*, *Purchaſe*, *Covenant*, *Generation*, or any other way whereby Men come to have a *Property* in one another. And that he has *more Goodneſs* towards us, or is *more inclinable* to contribute to our *Happineſs* than *Miſery*, is manifeſt from the *Benefits*, which we have already received from him.

The inference I draw from hence is, that, as *our Reaſon*, and *Judgment*, which tell us, what ought, or ought not to be done; and as our *natural Inclinations*, and *Averſions*, which diſpoſe, and excite us to act agreeably to our Reaſon were given us by God, with a deſign of engaging us to act accordingly; ſo, moreover, were we put into ſuch a *State*

and

and *Condition*, with regard to one another, that the neceſſary Relations reſulting from Society might put us in mind of our relation to God, and of the proper peculiar Actions conſequent upon it; ſo that, by a *conſtant traditional Education* in the exerciſe of theſe Duties of Subjection, of different ſorts, *to one another*, we ſhould be led to the Acknowledgement of our Obligations *to a Superior Being*, more eaſily, than if every Man had been left to himſelf, to find them out, by the uſe of *his own Faculties only*, without theſe particular *Occaſions* of ſetting his *Reaſon* and *Inclinations* on work.

All which Conſiderations concerning the *State of humane Nature*, and *Society*, are at leaſt *very probable* Arguments, that we are *actually obliged* by God to ſuch a particular way of living as we call *Religion:* and conſequently, we have Reaſon to conclude, that a careful *practice* of *Religion* (all things conſidered,) will contribute *more* to our *Happineſs*, than a *Neglect* or *Tranſgreſſion* of it; becauſe the ſame God, who deſigns us for *Happineſs*, deſigns us alſo for the *Practice of the Duties of Religion*, tho' we do

not yet perceive an *immediate Connexion* between *Religion*, and *Happineſs*; which is the next thing to be proved.

3. In the third place then I ſhall give ſome *poſitive* and *direct* Proof from the *Nature of Religion it ſelf*, that a *regular Practice* of all thoſe *Duties* or *Obligations* of which it conſiſts would certainly conduce to the *greateſt Happineſs* that Man is capable of, conſidered only in his *preſent Condition*, as included within the Bounds of *this* Life.

'Tis plainly perceived upon a ſhort tranſient View and Compariſon of the *Humane* and *Divine Natures* that *Man* was *made* and *deſigned by God* for *Happineſs*; and by the *irreſiſtible Deſires of Happineſs*, and *Averſions* to *Miſery*, that we Experience in our ſelves, as alſo by our *conſtant unalterable Endeavours* to attain the one and avoid the other, we are more nearly and neceſſarily convinced, that *the Enjoyment* of the pureſt moſt unallayed *Happineſs* that we are capable of, muſt be the *ultimate End* of our *Being* and all *our Actions*.

Since therefore *God* hath *made us capable*

ble of Happineſs, and *deſigned us for it*, and we *find our ſelves neceſſarily determined to aim* at this End; ſince the only way of attaining this End, is by *our Actions*, and we are aſſured by Experience that all our Actions do not lead to it, but that *Miſery* as well as *Happineſs* may be the *Effect* and *Conſequence* of our Actions, it follows from hence, that there muſt be *one particular way of acting*, which, if ſteadily purſued, will certainly procure us *greater Happineſs* than we can poſſibly attain by *any other*.

And farther, if we are *deſigned for Happineſs*, and this Happineſs be attainable only by one particular way of acting, 'tis certain that the ſame God who deſigned us for ſuch an End muſt deſign alſo that we ſhould uſe ſuch means as would conduct us thither.

In Conformity to which Deſigns we cannot but believe that, as he hath given us a *certain Knowledge* of and *neceſſary Determinations toward* our *End*, he muſt have given us alſo *ſufficient Tokens* and *Indications* of the *Means* that lead to it; and, upon Examination we are ſatisfied that he has done ſo; *by framing*

our Minds after ſuch a manner that we are neceſſarily determined to approve ſome Actions and to condemn others, and to judge our ſelves obliged to do what we approve, and to avoid what we condemn; by *giving us ſuch natural Propenſions and Averſions* agreeable to the Judgments of our Reaſon, as by a ſudden and unperceivable Influence diſpoſe us to, and aſſiſt us in the Performance of the ſame Actions which Reaſon preſcribes; and by *putting us into ſuch a ſtate or condition of Life* with reſpect to one another, wherein the different kinds of Government and Subjection, and the Notions and Actions reſulting from thence unavoidably lead us to the Acknowledgment of God's Superiority, Power, and Right of obliging, and of the Neceſſity of our Obedience to him, in all the ſeveral Inſtances of Duty, in which we conceive our ſelves bound to any governing Relation among Men, but in a much higher and more exalted manner, as becomes the mighty Inequality between *God* and *Man*.

From whence we are farther led to conclude that *all other Duties* and Obligations which we apprehend our ſelves

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under, with reſpect to *our ſelves*, or *others*, are the Effect of our *Obligation to God*, the *Supreme Governour of the World*, whoſe *Power* and *Right* are over *all things*, *original*, and *independent*; from whom all *other Powers* and *Rights* are *derived*; and on whom they *depend*; the Senſe of which Obligation renders all our Actions that are duely influenced by it *Religious*, tho' *God* be not the *immediate Object* of them.

And theſe are ſufficient Marks and Evidences to aſſure us that *God* does *require* us to act ſuch a particular way, and conſequently that we *are actually obliged* to frame our Lives according to thoſe Rules and Meaſures which come under the Name of *Religion*; unleſs it can be ſhewn, from *more certain Diſcoveries* of the *Nature of Man*, and the *Deſign of God*, that, notwithſtanding all theſe fair Appearances, *Religion* is not the *Way to Happineſs*. But, as 'tis manifeſt from what we have already obſerved of the *Nature of God*, and *our own Frame* and Conſtitution, that no higher Aſſurances can be given us of the Truth of any thing than what we have had in this

matter, from a Concurrence of our *Reaſon*, *natural Inclinations*, and *external Condition*, and that we cannot be deceived in aſſenting to ſuch Teſtimony; ſo, upon farther Experiences, and Obſervations, taken from our ſelves, and the State of Mankind, with relation to Religion, we ſhall find that *Religion* is, in *its own Nature*, ſo *fitted* and *ſuited* to the *Nature of Man*, and ſo *proportion'd* to the *original Diſpoſitions*, and *Deſires of the Soul*, as by a *proper Tendency* and *Efficacy* to *promote his Happineſs*.

This appears firſt by what we feel in our ſelves. What juſt and impartial *Reaſon approves* we find a *Pleaſure* in approving; *Inclination* ſuperadded to Judgment *heightens* the pleaſing Sentiment; *acting* what *Nature inclines to* and *Reaſon warrants*, is accompanied with a new and higher Satisfaction, all which Pleaſures we repeat and enjoy over again by *Reflexion*. And, if any *Pain* or *Uneaſineſs* either mixes with the Pleaſure, or attends it, *that* does not ariſe from the *ſame Thoughts* or *Actions* that *this* does, but from ſome *contrary Application of Mind*, either in our ſelves, or others, which

which obſtructs, and oppoſes us in the Practice of Religion, or from ſome other *extrinſical Cauſe* which has no Dependance upon, or Connexion with Religion; ſo that the *due Performance* of any Religious Action is never *properly* the *Cauſe* of any *Pain* or *Trouble* to him that performs it, however in ſome Inſtances it may ſeem to be the Occaſion of it.

But, in order to be farther ſatisfied of the *natural Connexion* between *Religion* and *Happineſs*, and that we may more clearly perceive that the latter is the true and genuine Effect of the former, we ſhould take off our Thoughts from the *preſent State of Mankind*, and repreſent to our ſelves *another Generation* of Men, living together in a *conſtant regular Obſervance* of *all the Duties* and *Obligations* of Religion: for there we ſhould behold ſuch a glorious Scene of Happineſs riſing before us, that, conſidering the *neceſſary Circumſtances of our mortal Condition*, we could not poſſibly imagine, or form an Idea of any thing *in this Life* beyond it.

This would be a State of *univerſal Peace*, *Safety*, *Tranquillity*, and *Love*, where

where there would be no *Injuries* nor *Fears*, no *Envy* nor *Diſtruſt*; where every Man would find all the Pleaſures of Friendſhip in the Company of every Man, and feel his own agreeable Thoughts towards others redoubled, by knowing that others had all the ſame Sentiments for him: all the *natural Appetites* and *Deſires of the Soul* would *be ſatisfied*, without a painful Eagerneſs in the Purſuit, or Satiety in the Enjoyment; and there would be no *irregular imaginary Deſires* to create the Uneaſineſs of *Diſappointment*: then every Man would be *pleaſed with all that he did*, and have his Satisfaction heightned by a full and entire Aſſurance that his Actions were *approved by the World*, and *acceptable to God*.

Was true *Religion* ſo *univerſally*, and *exactly* practiſed among Men, they would engage the *Power* and *Wiſdom of the ſupreme Governour* in their Favour, by the Honour, Reſpect, and Obedience which they paid him; they would be ſure of all the Benefits and Advantages of *humane Strength and Skill*, by a mutual Performance of all the Duties of Society; and by an equal regular Conduct, and Man-

Management of their own particular Capacities and Powers, they would preſerve *themſelves* in the fitteſt and moſt proper Condition of enjoying thoſe agreeable Satisfactions, which God had put within their Reach, and would prolong the Enjoyment of them, by extending their Lives to the utmoſt Term, to which by any Endeavours of their own, they could poſſibly carry them.

Whoever takes a full and diſtinct View of *Religion*, in all its *Power* and *Extent*, muſt acknowledge that theſe are the *true* and *neceſſary Effects* of it, where its Influence is freely diſpenſed, without Check or Oppoſition from contrary Cauſes. And what *greater Happineſs* than this can we conceive our ſelves capable of without a longer *Date of preſent Life*, or a *proſpect of another?* or, at leaſt, what greater is attainable by any *other Actions* beſides *thoſe of Religion?*

But this, I confeſs, is all but an *imaginary Scene*, a *bare Idea* or Pattern drawn by the Mind, which never was, and perhaps never will be exemplified *in the reality of things:* and therefore it does not neceſſarily follow from hence that, when the *Generality of Men* act *contrary*

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to Religion, as now they do, *thoſe* few who are mixt with them, and live *exactly according to the Rules and Precepts of it*, ſhall enjoy more Happineſs than any of the reſt, much leſs *ſuch* whoſe Practice is *inconſtant* and *defective*, which is certainly the Caſe of the beſt and moſt careful Obſervers of thoſe meaſures of acting which Religion preſcribes.

However, thus much, I think, may juſtly be inferr'd, That *Religion* is, in *its own Nature*, *productive* of *Happineſs*, and of nothing elſe, and conſequently was *deſign'd* and *ordain'd by God* for the obtaining this Effect.

From whence I conclude, that if Man was *made* for *Happineſs*, and was *directed* and *diſpoſed* to ſeek it by the *means of Religion*, and if theſe means are found to be in *their own Nature ſufficient*, but are ſome way or other, without the Fault of the Perſon who uſes them, *render'd ineffectual for the preſent*; from hence, I ſay, we may certainly conclude that *God*, who in his great Wiſdom has order'd all theſe things, did not order them in vain, but has ſo *contrived* them that, *ſome time or other*, the *End* to which they all point

ſhall

ſhall be *obtained*; and therefore, if a *full* and *exact* Obſervance of *all* the Duties of Religion be not attended with a ſuitable Happineſs *in this Life*, 'tis a ſtrong Proof that there will be a *future State*, in which there will be Rewards anſwerable to the higheſt Performances and Expectations.

We have Reaſon alſo, from the *Goodneſs* and *Wiſdom* of God, to hope, that the *ſincere Endeavours* of thoſe, whoſe Courſe is ſometimes interrupted with voluntary Tranſgreſſions of the Rules preſcribed them, will notwithſtanding, by ſome *Favour* or *Grace*, procure them a *State of Happineſs*. But this we may be ſure of, that God will put a *mighty Diſtinction* between ſuch as *do but ſometimes* deviate from thoſe *religious meaſures* which he hath propoſed to them, and ſuch as *conſtantly* act by *different Principles*.

4. The Proof of this Concluſion is the fourth thing I have undertaken, in order to the Eſtabliſhment of the *Truth* and *Neceſſity* of *Religion*, under which head I am to ſhew, that the *Defect* of a *general* and *regular* Practice of Religion, and

and the *Conſequences* of this Defect, do neceſſarily lead us to the Acknowledgment of ſuch *a future State*, as is ſufficient to determine us to prefer one particular way of Life before another, upon ſuch Reaſons and Motives, that is, ſuch degrees of *Happineſs and Miſery*, than which we are ſure greater, and more powerful cannot be offered to us.

'Tis very plain, that Religion is not *univerſally* practiſed in the World, nor do the *generality* of any *Nation* or *Society* of Men make their Duty to God the governing Principle of their Actions. 'Tis manifeſt likewiſe, that *thoſe few* who are *ſenſible of their Obligations*, and do endeavour to diſcharge them, do in many Inſtances *neglect* them, or *act contrary* to them: upon which Accounts it happens, that as there is more Miſery in the World than our mortal Condition would otherwiſe ſubject us to, ſo it oftentimes falls to the *religious Man's* Lot to have the *greateſt ſhare* of it.

Nor is all the Trouble and Uneaſineſs he ſuffers the Effect of *vicious Habits* and *Impreſſions* mixing with, and obſtructing the Performance of his Duty, or carrying him

him to contrary Actions, (tho very much be owing to this Cauſe) but a great many Afflictions and Calamities are brought upon him by the Malice and Hatred of wicked Men, *purely for his being religious*; ſo that, did he *perfectly* and compleatly fulfil all his Duty to God, there is Reaſon to believe, that his *Miſery* would be proportionably *encreaſed*.

From whence it plainly follows, that God hath provided ſome *other ſtate of Happineſs* for ſuch as live *exactly* according to his Purpoſe and Intention *here*; which will be ſo full and ſufficient a Recompence for all the Miſery they have indured in this Life, as to juſtify their Obedience to God, notwithſtanding their preſent Sufferings upon that account.

For, if God *deſign'd Man for Happineſs*, (as 'tis certain he did,) and *appointed Religion* to be the *means* of obtaining it, (as manifeſtly appears from his annexing Pleaſure to the pureſt and moſt unmixt practice of *Piety* and *Virtue*, as well as from ſeveral other Indications,) 'tis impoſſible to ſuppoſe that, after a due and proper Uſe of the means, God ſhould ſuffer his Ends to be *defeated*, by the *derived*, *dependent Power*, and *Contrivance* of

other

other Beings, and ſhould order things ſo, that thoſe who were *moſt diligent and exact* in obſerving the trueſt meaſures of acting, ſhould, *for that very reaſon*, meet with the *leaſt Succeſs*.

Should we therefore ſuppoſe a *few Perſons perfectly religious*, afflicted and tormented by wicked Men, barely *upon that account*, (as there can be no other, if they are what we ſuppoſe them to be;) we muſt then conclude, that God has *mighty Bleſſings in ſtore* for them, in compariſon of which their *preſent Sufferings are as nothing*.

From hence alſo we may infer, that thoſe whoſe *ſincere Reſolutions* and *Endeavours* are not attended with *exact* and *univerſal Performance*, and yet, who are rendred *more miſerable* by the Actions of wicked Men than they otherwiſe would have been, for the ſake of thoſe degrees of Religion they have attained to; 'tis reaſonable, I ſay, to conclude that thoſe will, *ſome time* or *other*, receive *more Happineſs*, or *leſs Miſery* than *others*, proportionably to the difference of their *Obedience*, and *Affliction now*: For, according as they have purſued the Means, ſo will their Attainments of the End be; or, if no Reward

ward be due but to a *full Diſcharge* of all *Obligations*, it cannot be imagin'd that thoſe who have Perform'd ſome part of what they were obliged to, and endeavoured at *general Obedience*, ſhould be puniſhed as highly as thoſe who have been guilty of a *greater*, or of a *total Neglect*, *Violation* or *Contempt* of their Duty.

However therefore it be as to the *manner of it*, 'tis very agreeable to the *Wiſdom* and *Deſigns of God*, according to all the Indications of them which he hath afforded Mankind, to make the Condition of thoſe, who act by the *Principles of Religion*, preferable, to that of others who act by *contrary Meaſures*, which it would not always be, were there no other *State* of *Life* after *this* is ended.

From all which it plainly follows, that there muſt be a *Future State*, in which Men will be diſtinguiſh'd from one another, by *different degrees* of *Happineſs and Miſery*, according to the *different regard* they had to *Religion in this Life*.

The Certainty of which State we are farther convinced of by the general *Wants*, *Miſeries*, and *Imperfections* of our pre-

ſent Nature; which proceed from ſome Principle, or Diſpoſition within us, contrary to that of Religion: which Principle, or Diſpoſition is the *Reaſon* of that *univerſal Wickedneſs* which reigns in the World.

Did Mankind enjoy all the Happineſs they were otherwiſe capable of in this *mortal Condition*, yet, ſo long as they found in themſelves *Capacities*, and *Deſires*, of *greater*, unknown, degrees of Pleaſure, which from the preſent Frame and Conſtitution of things they had no Hope, or Proſpect of injoying, and felt an *Uneaſineſs* at the Thoughts of *parting* with thoſe Enjoyments, of which they were *poſſeſs'd*, by the unalterable Decree of *Death*, which they knew themſelves ſubject to; were they I ſay in ſuch a Condition, they would have great Reaſon from hence to conclude, that God did deſign them for ſome other *more perfect State*, where all their *Capacities* would be filled, *all their Deſires* ſatisfied, and *no kind of Pain* or *Uneaſineſs* would check or allay *the Fullneſs of their joy:* not that they themſelves would have any juſt cauſe to Complain, as if God had not dealt kindly by them, in granting them *leſſer degrees* of

of Happineſs than what they were *capable of*; but becauſe, in ſuch a caſe as is ſuppoſed, their *Capacities* and *Deſires* would be given them *in vain*; which does not ſeem conſiſtent with the *Wiſdom of God.* And, moreover, the *Uneaſineſs of Deſiring* what was *impoſſible*, and the painful *Fears* and *Apprehenſions* of what was *certain*, which they would then experience, would appear *inconſiſtent* with *God's Deſign of making Man for Happineſs*; and therefore it would be more agreeable to all the Notions we have of God, and to all the Obſervations we have made upon his other Works, to ſuppoſe that, had *this Life* been the utmoſt Extent of Mans *Being* and *Happineſs*, God would not have given him a ſenſe, or proſpect of *any other:* upon ſuch a Suppoſition as this, 'tis highly rational to think, that *conſtant even Contentment* would have bounded all his Thoughts, that his Soul would always have remained at the *ſame equal Poize*, and that he would have *lived*, without *deſiring more than* what he actually *enjoyed*, and have *died*, without any previous *Fears of loſing* what he had in preſent.

And, if there be good ground to believe, that there would be a *State of future Happineſs*, tho' Men *enjoyed all that they were capable of here*, according to the preſent Circumſtances of their Nature and Condition; both becauſe their preſent Happineſs was not compleat, by reaſon of ſome Pain and Uneaſineſs mixt with it, and becauſe their Capacities and Deſires exceeded all their actual Enjoyments; how much more reaſonable is it to make the ſame Concluſion now, when we, every way, *fall ſo far ſhort even of that Happineſs*, which the condition *of this Life* might allow us? as will plainly appear, if we compare the preſent State of the World, with that Draught and Repreſentation, which we have before given of Humane Life, under a regular Practice of the Duties of Religion.

We are, now, not only conſcious, in general, of Capacities greater of Happineſs than what we enjoy; but there are ſeveral kinds, and degrees of it, within our Knowledge, and ſeemingly within our Reach and Power, which, with all the Endeavours we can uſe, we are not able to obtain: and the more Wants we are ſenſi-

ſenſible of, and the better and more particularly we know what they are, the ſtronger are our Deſires to have them ſupplied, and the greater is our Uneaſineſs under Defeats and Diſappointments, which, Experience aſſures us, are very frequent. Then the Satisfactions which we do meet with, are commonly very ſhort, and mixed with Pain, and we have a great many other things to fear, beſides *Death*.

But the Troubles and *Calamities* of *Humane Life* are too well known to need being inſiſted upon, and too large a ſubject to be particularly treated of in this place. 'Tis ſufficient to my purpoſe to remark in general, what I think may very ſafely be affirmed, that, if what falls to every Man's ſhare was fairly computed, the *Miſery* of the *greateſt part* of Mankind would out-weigh their *Happineſs*.

If, therefore, *Man* was *deſign'd* by *God* for *Happineſs*, and is ſo framed that he *cannot enjoy compleat Happineſs* in *this Life*, without a mixture of Uneaſineſs, and yet has *Capacities*, and *Deſires* of *greater* than he can conceive belonging to his Nature, in the neceſſary Circumſtances of it here; and farther, if Mankind be now involv'd in ſuch a State or Condition of Life, in

which they *all actually enjoy much leſs Happineſs* than they find themſelves *by Nature capable of here*, and the *greateſt part of them* have a *larger ſhare* of the *Troubles*, than the *Advantages* of Life; from hence I think it may be truly and certainly inferr'd, that there will be *another State* of *pure compleat Happineſs*, anſwerable, at leaſt, to the higheſt Notions and Conceptions which we are able to frame of it.

But ſince, as has before been prov'd, God hath not *abſolutely* and *unconditionally* determined *all Men* to be happy, but hath made *Happineſs* and *Miſery* to depend upon our *Actions*, and conſequently hath *annex'd Happineſs* to a *particular way of acting*, we have all the Reaſon in the World to believe, that the *Happineſs of another State* will be the Portion of *thoſe*, and *thoſe only*, who *live according to the Rules of Religion here*; and this, I believe, no body who owns a *future State*, is diſpoſed to doubt of; and therefore I ſhall ſpend no time in an unneceſſary Proof of it.

And, tho' there are none to be found who *exactly* diſcharge *all* the Obligations of Religion, yet 'tis more agreeable to

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our reaſon to conclude that thoſe who *ſincerely endeavour* to do it, ſhall, by the eſpecial *Grace* and *Favour of God*, in ſome ſuch way or manner as to his Wiſdom ſhall ſeem fit, be rendred *capable* of *future Happineſs*, than to believe, that *all Men* ſhall be *miſerable*, and none of them obtain Happineſs, contrary to all the Marks and Indications we have of the *Deſign of God* in making Man.

Suppoſing therefore what I think has been ſufficiently proved under this Head, that there will be *a future State*, in which all Men will be *happy*, or *miſerable*, according as they have behaved themſelves here, with regard to what we call *Religion:* this, I ſay, being allowed, it manifeſtly follows from hence, that it is *more for our Happineſs to act* up to the Rules and Directions of Religion, than to purſue any other Meaſures, whatever we may happen to ſuffer in this Life for ſo doing; becauſe the Happineſs of a future State will ſo far outweigh all the ſufferings of this, that, when we come to enjoy it, we ſhall be forced to acknowledge, that the end and reward of our Labours was very well worth all the Troubles, and Difficulties we

ſour in the way to it; and if it be *abſolutely with regard to the whole extent and duration of our Being*, more for our Happineſs to live Religiouſly than otherwiſe, then are we in the higheſt and ſtricteſt ſenſe *obliged* to live ſo, which was the thing I undertook to prove.

Nay further, if, beſides the *natural Pleaſure* which reſults from *Religious Acts*, while we are practiſing them here, God has given us a *certain Proſpect*, and *well grounded Hope* of a *State*, of *greater Bliſs hereafter*, I dare venture to aſſert that, *generally ſpeaking*, *Religion* will prove the *ſureſt way to happineſs*, *even in this Life*; ſo that, tho' *ſometimes*, the *Sufferings* of *ſome particular Men*, upon that account, may exceed all the noble Satisfactions which Religion can afford them here, yet, all things being conſider'd, and the different Methods of acting weigh'd together, with all the probable Conſequences, which, according to the common courſe of things, may attend them, there will be ſufficient reaſon for a wiſe Man to prefer the practice of Religious Duties to the ways of Irreligion, upon the ſcore of the *preſent Happineſs* which he is likely to enjoy by

that

that means, reckoning in the *Hopes* and *proſpect only*, and not the *Poſſeſſion of another State:* as will more plainly appear under the next General Head of Diſcourſe:

Which is a Proof of *Religion*, from a Compariſon of it with *Irreligion*, and the neceſſary Conſequences ariſing from thence.

IV. I have before given a *poſitive direct* proof of Religion, drawn from the *natures* and *relations* of the *Beings* concerned in it, I ſhall now endeavour to confirm the Truth of what I have advanced, by ſhewing, what *Abſurd* and *Unreaſonable* things would follow from a *denial of Religion*, and how *Pernicious* and *Deſtructive* to Mankind, the eſtabliſhment of a contrary Belief and Practice would be.

In the management of which Subject, I ſhall firſt conſider the *ſeveral Steps* and *Degrees of Irreligion*; and then ſhew how far

far they all led to the ſame Ends, and what are the peculiar Conſequences of each.

Irreligion, ſo far as it conſiſts in *Opinion* or *Belief*, is of three Sorts: for either Men deny the *being of a God*, and conſequently, all Religious Duty falls of courſe, when this Foundation of it is taken away; or they acknowledge a God, but deny that *Man* is *any ways Obliged by him to act* ſo as we pretend that he ought to act; or elſe they own that they are in ſeveral Inſtances obliged to Worſhip God, and to live according to thoſe Rules and Principles of Action, which we have before mentioned, but they do not believe that *there is any future State of Rewards and Puniſhments* after this Life.

Now theſe are very different Notions, conſidered barely in themſelves, as matters of *Speculation* only; but, if we examine the *practical Effects and Conſequences* of them, we ſhall find that they all aim at the *ſame thing*: which is, the eſtabliſhing a *general liberty of Living as every Man pleaſes*, upon Principles contrary to thoſe of Religion.

This is plain of the two firſt Opinions, which

which *take away all manner of Religious obligation*, and, upon ſtrict examination, will be found to be True of the laſt; which ſo far *Looſens* and *Weakens the Influence of Religion*, that it will not be able to bear up againſt the force of contrary Motives to Action.

But let us conſider theſe Notions apart, and then we ſhall the better perceive what the *direct*, and *immediate Conſequences* of *each Opinion* are, and how far they *fall in with one another.*

Firſt then, we will ſuppoſe that there is *no God*; and Conſequently *no Religion:* this being ſuppoſed, what are we to think of *our Selves?* What kind of Beings are we? How came we firſt to *exiſt*, and what are we to *do* while we continue to be?

That we *are*, and that we *feel our ſelves ſo and ſo Affected* 'tis impoſſible to doubt: And the ſame way, that we are aſſured of our own *Being*, or of any *ſimple Perception* whatſoever, we are likewiſe aſſured of the *Agreement* and *Connexion* of ſome things, and the *diſagreement* and *inconſiſtency* of others; *viz.* by ſuch an *immediat conſciouſneſs*, as we can neither reſiſt nor

nor diſtruſt: but if theſe things, which we *neceſſarily perceive*, as together, or aſunder, and which we cannot poſſibly perceive otherwiſe, ſhould not be Joined or Separated accordingly, *in the Nature and Reality of things*, but only *in our Mind*, then do we know nothing *certain* beyond *Appearances*, and the *Affections of our own Minds*, and yet are *invincibly Diſpoſed to believe* what may be *Falſe*, with ſo ſtrong an aſſent, that 'tis extreamly difficult to entertain the leaſt Suſpition of a bare poſſibility of its Falſhood; as any Man may experience in himſelf, if he will but try to Doubt of what we call a *ſelf-evident Propoſition*; which is the reaſon that there are ſo few who pretend to be *thorough Scepticks*, if there ever were really any ſuch, as, I dare confidently affirm there never were. But, if it were poſſible for us to prevail with our ſelves to doubt of the *Being of a God*, after a full and impartial Conſideration of the Proof before given of this Truth, I do not ſee where our Doubts could ſtop, or what could determine our Aſſent to any thing elſe: *Reaſon*, *Truth*, and *Evidence* would then be bare uninforming *Sounds*; our whole Life would

would be nothing but Suſpence and Amazement; Darkneſs and Ignorance would cover our Underſtandings, and continual Uneaſineſs would ariſe from a reſtleſs Succeſſion of vain, undetermin'd Thoughts.

If therefore there *be no God*, notwithſtanding that there is the ſame *appearance* of *Evidence* for his Being, as there is for the truth of any thing elſe; (as thoſe who have fully examined the Proofs of it, muſt allow) then have we the ſame Reaſon to queſtion *all our other Knowledg*. The Conſequence of which would be, that we ſhould then feel in our ſelves a continual deſire of Knowing, and a conſtant agitation of Thoughts in the ſearch or purſuit of Knowledg, joyn'd with a continual diſtruſt of all appearances of Truth, without any manner of Reſt or Acquieſcence, which would be ſuch an uneaſie State as no Man, I believe, could bear; and, ſuch as no Man was ever yet ſenſible of.

But this perhaps is too much to ſuppoſe, it being very eaſie to imagine, that there may be Men who deny the *Being of God*, and *all manner of Religion*, without ſuſpecting any of their *other Knowledg*, and

and who, in all other matters, Argue from the ſame Principles, and Act by the ſame Rules as the reſt of Mankind do. 'Tis very poſſible, that Perſons who never gave themſelves the trouble of being acquainted with *Mathematicks*, may think all the Demonſtrations, which are there pretended to, falſe, and the whole Science a Cheat, without calling in queſtion any other parts of Knowledge which they have happen'd to be converſant in: and it is much more conceivable, that ſuch as never duly and fairly conſidered the Arguments for the being of *God* and *Religion*, ſhould deny both, without diſtruſting their Faculties upon other Occaſions; which is certainly the caſe of all that pretend to ſuch a denial.

Now in applying my ſelf to theſe Men, I do not think it ſufficient to alledg, that the Proof I have given of theſe great Truths, is *directly* and *immediately* drawn from *ſuch Principles* as they own, and make uſe of in other matters, though this may certainly be affirmed; to alledg this is not ſufficient, becauſe they may have that eaſie Anſwer ready which all People give who are fond of their Opinions, and unwilling upon enquiry to find them

them falſe: thus, I ſay, they would be apt to anſwer ; That Arguments drawn out to any length are very Uncertain; that there may be a Miſtake in ſome part of the Deduction ; that *conſequences*, at a great diſtance from their *firſt Principles*, may not have all *the* Force and Strength of thoſe Principles convey'd to them; and that therefore, though the *whole Contexture* of the Proof ſeems ſpecious, they have no reaſon to change ſuch Opinions as they are fully perſwaded of, for others which they certainly perceive to be Falſe, though they are ſet out ſo plauſibly, that it is not eaſie to tell where the Falſhood of them lies.

Since therefore the Perſons who *deny the Being of God* and *Religion*, are not well acquainted with what they deny; have very imperfect Notions of theſe things, and do not trouble themſelves to look into them, or to conſider the Proofs that are brought for them; but yet are ſuppoſed to underſtand *their own Principles*, which they profeſs to be well perſwaded of, and to act by; it cannot but be very proper to diſcourſe with them upon this Subject, and, ſuppoſing *their Principles* true, to conſider them

them in their full Extent, and to examine into the genuine conſequences of them: and, if when I have given a *true Idea* and *Repreſentation* of *Irreligion*, they will own it ſtill, I deſire no better Witneſſes to confirm the Truth of what I have urg'd in the Defence of *Religion*.

Suppoſing then that *there is no God nor Religion*, and that we muſt *judge*, and *act*, as our *Reaſon* preſcribes we ſhould in ſuch a Caſe; theſe two things do *neceſſarily* and *immediately* follow:

1. That *all Men are equal*, and that there is no ſuch thing as *Superiority*, *Right*, or *Authority* of any kind.

2. That *every Man* is to *act*, as *he himſelf* ſhall *judge* moſt *convenient* for his *own particular Happineſs*.

1. That *all Men are equal* is very plain, if we conſider the *Original Capacities*, and *Powers* of Humane Nature, without any external Advantages of *Birth*, *Education*, and *Society*: nor do theſe Differences, if there be no God, cauſe any ſuch *Inequality* between particular Men, as to make one Man *ſubject* to another,

or

or to lay any *Obligation* upon the one to act according to the Will of the other.

There needs no further Proof of this but to consider, That no Man, whatever his Circumstances in the World are, can have such a *certain uncontrolable Power* over any of his Brethren, as to make it *necessary* for another Man to obey him in what he commands. For, whatever a Man promises or threatens, be it never so great in either kind, may, by some sudden unforeseen Accident, be hindred from taking effect, even in the moment of Execution; besides, whatever is promised or threatned, being certainly of no longer continuance than Life, be it never so great in it self, it may not, oftentimes, countervail some other Motive which the Person thus accosted is govern'd by. There may be some particular Enjoyment that he is possess'd of, which his imagination has so heightned, or which Habit has made so necessary to him, that nothing pleasant or grievous in Life can be of weight enough to determine him to a contrary Choice.

Thus have we seen Men of *no Religion*

ſacrifice all that they had, and bear all that could be inflicted upon them, rather than they would renounce their *Ambition* or *Revenge*, or do any thing that they thought would ſtain the *glory*, which their former Actions had procured them.

From whence it follows, That, *except there be a God*, no Man can have a *true Right of obliging* another; the *Right of obliging* being founded in *ſuch a Power* of contributing to the *Happineſs* or *Miſery* of others as their *Reaſon* muſt *neceſſarily* ſubmit to; which no Man can have, without being ſupported by *Divine Authority*.

It may indeed ſo happen, ſometimes, by the favour of particular Circumſtances, that a Perſon may propoſe to me to act after ſuch a manner, upon *ſuch probable Motives and Reaſons*, as may convince me, that 'tis more for *my Happineſs* to act *thus* than *otherwiſe*; but this is not ſufficient to give any particular Man, or rank of Men, a *Right* to my Obedience; becauſe I can never be *ſure* of their *Power* of enforcing theſe *Motives*: and therefore, tho' I do find the World at preſent ſo conſtituted, that Men of ſuch a *Character*, or *Relation*, have

have *more probable* Opportunities of contributing to my *Happineſs* or *Miſery* than others, I am not to look upon them as having any *Right* or *Authority* over me; but ſuch whoſe Wills and Counſels I follow oftner than thoſe of other Men, becauſe I judge it *more for my Intereſt* ſo to do: but when I judge it more for my particular Intereſt to follow my *own*, or *any other Man*'s Advice, then am I *as much obliged* to act accordingly; and in ſuch a caſe, I have *as true a Right of my own*, or the Perſon whoſe Advice I take has *as much Right* and *Authority* over me, as my *Father*, *Maſter*, or *Prince*.

All which *Titles*, and *Relations*, and whatever elſe are uſed to imply *Government* and *Subjection*, if there be *no God*, are *falſe impoſing Names*; and, if any Advantage has been taken in our Infancy to convey any Notions of *Authority*, *Duty*, or *Obligation* by them, we are to ſhake off *all theſe Prejudices*, as well as *thoſe* concerning *God and Religion*, which, (as we are now to believe) have been made uſe of, only for the better enforcing *theſe* upon us.

We muſt diſcard likewiſe thoſe other falſe Notions of *Right*, and *Property*; by

the means of which, ſome Men challenge to themſelves larger Shares and Portions of the neceſſary Supports and Advantages of Life, than are allowed to the reſt of Mankind, for which there is no manner of Ground *in reaſon*: For, *all* Men being *equal*, they have *all an equal Right* and *Title* to every Thing which they are capable of enjoying, or poſſeſſing; nor can any *Priority of Poſſeſſion*, any *Pains* or *Labour of Acquiſition*, any *Promiſe*, *Contract*, or *Agreement* whatſoever be ſufficient to give a Man, a *Right*, or *Property* in any thing, to the Excluſion of any other Man; which will appear very plainly if we conſider,

2. The ſecond Conſequence ariſing from the Suppoſition of *no God nor Religion*, which is this; That *every particular Man* is to act as *he himſelf* ſhall judge moſt convenient for his *own Perſonal Intereſt or Happineſs*.

There is no other *Principle*, *Reaſon*, or *Motive* of Action imaginable in ſuch a caſe. And, if all Men *do*, and *muſt act* according to this *Principle*, they muſt alſo, if they will be conſiſtent with themſelves, *judge*, that there is no ſuch thing

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as *Authority*, or *Duty*, *Right*, or *Property*, or any thing elſe commonly thought to be the *Cauſes of* them, to be *implied in* them, or to *reſult from* them; that is, That there can be *no Action* of *their own*, or *other Mens*, or *any other Circumſtance* or *Relation* whatſoever, which can be any bar or hindrance to any Man's Endeavours of bettering his Condition, or advancing his Happineſs, *when*, and in *what manner ſoever* he ſhall think fit.

Now, that this is *the neceſſary*, and *only Principle*, which ſuch Perſons as deny the *Being of God and Religion* can be influenc'd by in their Actions, is very plain, if we conſider theſe two things, which, as has before been ſhewn, *Reaſon* and *Experience* aſſure us of:

Firſt, That we are *naturally*, and *neceſſarily determined* to ſeek, and endeavour after our own Happineſs, whether there be a *God* or *no*, or whatever other Notions we have of things; which is too plain to need any Proof.

Secondly, That, if *there be no God*, no Man hath it in his *Power* to contribute ſo far to the Happineſs or Miſery of another, that it muſt needs be *unavoidably* better for that other to do what he pre-

ſcribes, than to act contrary to his direction, and that the Perſon thus *preſcribed to* cannot *poſſibly* help judging ſo.

And, if no *Man* hath ſuch a Power, there are no *other higher Beings* that we know of; none at leaſt, if there be no God, to be imagined, who have *greater Power* over us than *one Man* hath over *another*.

From whence it follows, That *every Man*, being *neceſſarily determined* to act for his own Happineſs, and *no Man* having *Power enough* to make the Obedidience of others to him *neceſſary* to their Happineſs, *no Man* is to *act* according to the Will of *another*, any *further* than he *himſelf judges* that he ſhall be the *happier* for ſo doing.

And if, moreover, we conſider how ſmall the *Differences of Power* are among Men, what *reciprocal Advantages* they have over one anothor, how *changeable* all theſe diſtinguiſhing Circumſtances are, and what *different Notions* and *Sentiments* Men have of the *Happineſs of this Life*: If, I ſay, we carefully conſider and weigh all this, we ſhall be ſtill more ſatisfied, that there can be no ſuch thing as *Authority*, or *Subjection*, *Obligation*,

tion, *Right*, or *Property*; and ſhall better perceive the whole Force and Influence of the forementioned Principle of Action.

Suppoſing then that, Societies being eſtabliſh'd as we now find them, due Care were taken to perſwade Mankind, that there was no ſuch thing as *God* or *Religion*; ſo that every Man, having throughly worn off *thoſe Notions*, was prepared to do whatever he judged moſt conducing to his own Happineſs: upon this Suppoſition, it muſt needs follow, that a great many Men would find themſelves very uneaſie, in the want of ſeveral things, which they ſaw others poſſeſs'd of, and in the performance of ſeveral Actions, by the command of others, who were free from that Trouble themſelves; and what could reſtrain ſuch Men from ſeizing upon what they wanted, and freeing themſelves from what was troubleſome to them, but the conſideration of worſting their Condition by a fruitleſs Tryal? But this Thought could not hold them long, becauſe ſo many would find themſelves in theſe Circumſtances, that they would ſoon be ſenſible of their Strength, and, being enraged at the Unreaſonableneſs of thoſe

few, whom they ſaw diſtinguiſhed from them by ſuch over-proportioned Advantages of Life, they would join together in a Deſign of bringing things to a greater *Equality:* And thoſe who had taſted the extraordinary pleaſures of Government and Exceſs, whoſe Imaginations had been entertain'd with the Pride and Elegance of Living, would endeavour to ſupport the *Difference of their Condition*, and be reſtleſs under the Loſs of it, and would employ all their Art and Strength to recover their Ground, and trample upon the reſt of Mankind.

This would be the Effect of a *full Eſtabliſhment* of *Irreligion* in the World, if we conſider the *preſent State* and *Conſtitution* of *all humane Societies*; there being no Nation or Society of Men, in which the *far greateſt Part* of the People are not forced to uſe *Abundance of Pains*, and to undergo a *great many Troubles*, *and Difficulties*, in *ſupplying their own Wants*, and in *miniſtring to the Eaſe and Pleaſure of others.*

But, let us ſuppoſe Men united together upon what Terms or Conditions we pleaſe, however things are divided among

mong them, if *every Man* be convinc'd that *there is no God nor Religion*, the *Confuſion* and *Miſery of all* will be the *certain Conſequence* of ſuch a Belief. For *every Man* being to purſue his *own Happineſs*, and there being as many *ſeveral Notions* of Happineſs as there are *different Paſſions* and *Inclinations* in the Soul of Man, all which require *different Methods of Purſuit*, 'tis impoſſible but Men muſt claſh and interfere one with another, and every one's Happineſs be built upon, or promoted by the Miſery of others; which muſt end in the worſt *State of War* imaginable. When Luſt, Ambition, or Revenge is the ruling Paſſion in a Man's Mind, what ſhould hinder him from making the Miſery, or Deſtruction of a Nation the way to his Satisfaction, if he can do it ſecurely, or judges nothing more terrible than the Uneaſineſs of his preſent Condition? And the ſame may be ſaid of any thing elſe that a Man places his chief Happineſs in, whatever was the Cauſe of ſuch a Choice.

All that can be alleged to avoid theſe *dreadful Conſequences*, which ſeem to be the *certain immediate Effects* of *Atheiſm*,

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is, that the *Advantages* of *Society* and *Union* are ſo very great, and every Man is ſo ſenſible that his own particular Happineſs is included in that of the Publick, that, by vertue of this very Principle, Men will readily agree to obſerve all ſuch things as tend to the *common Preſervation*, and Welfare of *Society*.

To which I anſwer, That this indeed, to Perſons who have felt or conſider'd the Inconveniencies and Calamities of a State of Diviſion, is a ſufficient Motive, to *enter into*, or *continue in* Society, upon ſuch Terms as do *then* ſeem to conduce to their particular Happineſs; but if, *afterwards*, it ſhall appear to any of them, that the *breaking* of any of theſe Terms and Conditions will contribute more to their Happineſs than the *keeping* them, they are *as much oblig'd* to *act contrary* to their *former Promiſe*, *Contract*, or *Agreement*, as they were *at firſt to make it*.

And, if we rightly conſider things, we ſhall find, That the *Generality* of *every Society* are Men of too narrow and confin'd Underſtandings, to perceive all the ill Conſequences which *their particular Actions*, may bring upon *Society*, and, if they have ſome confuſed Notions of them,

them, yet the Miſchiefs do not appear to them ſo near as to fall in *their Days*, and involve *them*, and they have no concern beyond *their own Lives*.

Beſides, the *greateſt part* both of thoſe who are, and thoſe who are not, capable of ſuch Judgments and Reflexions as theſe, are too ſtrongly affected with the Senſe of *preſent Good* or *Pleaſure* to forego the *immediate Gratifications* of their Deſires, upon a *faint Proſpect* of *uncertain Miſchiefs* that may attend them; and which, if they do happen at all, do not ſeem *greater* or *more difficult to be born*, than their preſent Self-denial.

He therefore who is a *thorough Atheiſt*, and will purſue his Principles as far as they will carry him, muſt look upon all the Notions of *Government*, *Right*, and *Property*, of what kind ſoever they be, with all the pretended *Grounds* and *Foundations* of them, and the ſeveral *Relations* ſuppoſed to reſult from them, either as *falſe Pretences*, deviſed by ſome cunning Men, by the means of which they would lay certain reſtraints upon *others*, that ſo *they* might enjoy *their own Liberty* to more advantage; or as *uſeleſs inſignificant Inventions*

ventions, which make no manner of Change in the Conduct of Life, but leave every Man to act the ſame way, as he would do, if there were no ſuch Notions or Expreſſions ever heard of:

He muſt look upon *himſelf* as the *Supreme Judge of his own Happineſs*, and the *Chief Governour* and *Director of his own Actions*: and being fully aſſured that *every Man elſe* is ſo too, he is not to expect that *any other Man* will contribute to *his Happineſs*, any further than as he thinks he ſerves *his own Intereſt* by it; nor can *he* conceive a Deſign of contributing to the Happineſs of *another Man*, but upon the *ſame Conſiderations*: And, being well convinc'd of theſe things, and reſolv'd to act accordingly, he muſt examine wherein his *chief Happineſs* conſiſts, and how he may beſt attain it; upon which Enquiry he will find, That he muſt place his Happineſs in the Enjoyment of the *greateſt Pleaſure* which he is capable of, and which has the *leaſt Allay*, or *mixture of Pain with it*. Now, in purſuing what he *thinks* the greateſt Pleaſure, and avoiding what he judges will be any ways Painful to him, He muſt *perform*, or *omit*, *any Action* whatſoever, the Performance, or

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Omiſſion of which, he *judges conducive* to *thoſe Ends* which he has propoſed to himſelf; and ſo he knows muſt *every other Man*, who *acts* upon the *ſame Principles* that he does, be his Notions of Happineſs or Miſery never ſo different from *his*: upon which account he cannot but acknowledge, that *all Actions* are *alike*, and *of the ſame Nature*, and that there is no ground for any diſtinction of them into *lawful* and *unlawful*, *juſt* and *unjuſt*, *vertuous* and *vitious*; becauſe there is no *Kind*, or *Sort of Action* imaginable, but may contribute indifferently, either to the *Happineſs*, or *Miſery*, of ſome Man: and conſequently, he muſt alſo grant, that there can be no *certain Rules*, or *Principles of Acting*, no *particular Set of Actions*, or *Scheme of Life*, which will *certainly* procure, any Man that follows it, *more Happineſs*, than he could obtain by *any other means*; but the *ſame Man* muſt be obliged oftentimes to act *contrary Ways*, and to purſue the *ſame End* by the *moſt oppoſite Methods* imaginable; and, if he be utterly diſappointed of his Hopes, by the interfering Purſuits of others, he muſt *change his chief Pleaſure*, and chuſe a new Object of his Happineſs, leaſt he ſhould undergo a great

a great deal of Miſery for obſtinately ſticking to his former Choice:

And further, the Perſon, whoſe Character we are drawing, if he will be true to his own Principles, ſhould not be deter'd from the Proſecution of his Ends, by any *Concern for the Happineſs of others*, or *Senſe of their Miſery*, or by any regard to their *Judgment* and *Opinion* concerning his Actions, and the Meaſures he takes:

He is never to prefer the *publick Good* of a *City*, *Nation*, or *Empire*, to his *own private Satisfaction*, tho' it were to laſt but for a moment, if he cannot be *ſo happy without it*. *Generoſity*, *Friendſhip*, and *Gratitude*, muſt give place, when they do not ſerve to promote his Attainment of what appears more agreeable to him than the doing ſuch things as go under thoſe Names; all Sentiments of *Tenderneſs*, *Pity*, and *Compaſſion* are to be laid aſide, when the *Sufferings* and *Miſeries of others* can procure him what he eſteems a greater Happineſs than the Eaſe of complying with thoſe fooliſh Diſpoſitions of his Nature or Temper, which, together with all other Inclinations that he finds

finds in himſelf, his *Reaſon* tells him are to be directed toward his *chief Happineſs*; which conſiſts in the *Gratification* of the *ſtrongeſt* and *moſt vigorous Paſſion* of the Soul, whichſoever it is that happens to be the uppermoſt in his Conſtitution:

He is to look upon all the Notions of *Praiſe*, *Honour*, and *Reputation*, as *meer empty Names*, when aſcribed to a Man on account of any thing but *Cunning* and *Art* in the *managing* and *advancing* his *own Intereſt*, and bringing about all his Deſigns of this nature, by the ſureſt and moſt effectual Means he can; and therefore nothing which ſerves for the promoting this end is to be accounted *baſe* or *diſhonourable*; but, if the World will, *contrary to Reaſon*, and *their own Principles*, agree to call ſome things ſo, and reputation be *neceſſary* to him in the Proſecution of his *chief Pleaſure*, or the *imaginary Uneaſineſs* of *Diſgrace* ſpoils his Enjoyment of it, he muſt comply with the *eſtabliſh'd Error*, while it prevails, but ſo far only as it *ſtands in his way to Happineſs*, or *helps to promote it*:

And laſtly, *The Perſon thus confirm'd in Irreligion*, being ſenſible that his *Life* is the *utmoſt Compaſs* and *Extent* of his

Happi-

Happineſs, all his *Cares* and *Endeavours*, all his *Concerns* and *Deſigns* are to be confined within the *ſame Bounds*; he is to have no regard to *Memory* or *Poſterity*, he is not to be *concern'd* if the *whole Race of Mankind* ſhould end with him, nor to abate any thing of *his preſent Satisfaction*, to procure the greateſt Advantages imaginable to *ſucceeding Generations*.

This is a ſhort Draught and Repreſentation of the *Faith*, and *Practice*, of *one* who, upon a *full perſuaſion of Mind*, denies the *Being of a God*.

'Tis true indeed, there are *very few*, if *any*, ſuch *thorough Atheiſts* in the World, as come up to this whole Character. The Generality of thoſe who are ſtiled ſo, are either ſuch as *never thought any thing of the matter*, or elſe have *ſome ſmall Remains of Religion* about them, which their *Reaſon*, and *Education* will not give them leave wholly to caſt off: But, if the *Ignorance* of the *one*, and *Prejudices* of the *other* were removed; (as if *Atheiſm* ſhould ſpread, and come into a general Reputation, they ſoon would be,) then ſhould we perceive that the diſmal

Effects

Effects and Conſequences of theſe Principles were far greater and more dreadful than we can now imagine or deſcribe. For there's a great deal of Difference between an *ignorant*, or *half perſuaded Atheiſt*, and *one* that is *poſitively* and *fully* ſo, *upon Judgment and Reflexion.* Should a *Nation* of People be duly taught and inſtructed in the *Doctrines of Irreligion*, they would be much more aſtoniſhingly wicked than *thoſe* who had *never heard of God*, or who *retain'd ſome looſe imperfect Notions of him.*

And if God ſhould ſuffer this to be the Reſult of the bold Talk and Arguing of the *preſent Atheiſts of this Nation*; they would then repent that they did not keep their opinions *to themſelves*, and make their Advantage of *other Peoples Credulity:* For, if *all the People*, or *any conſiderable Number of them* were of their perſwaſion, they would ſoon overturn *Government*, and bring all things to an *Equality*; and then farewel all the *Pleaſures*, *Enjoyments*, and *Conveniencies* of Living, when *every Man* muſt *labour* and *toyl* to maintain his *own Life*, and

at the ſame time be in *continual Fear* of having it taken away by *others*.

What I have ſaid of *Atheiſm*, is, with very little Difference, applicable to all manner of *Deiſm*, which is ſuch an acknowledgment of a *God*, as includes little or no Religion in it. For, if the *Deiſt* be of the *Epicurean Sect*, and makes *God* an *unconcern'd Spectator of Human Actions*, he muſt, as to what concerns his own Conduct, *judge* and *act* altogether the *ſame way* that the *Atheiſt* does: For, if *God require nothing* of him, if he be *not pleaſed* or *offended with any thing* he does, nor hath *annex'd* any *Rewards* or *Puniſhments* to *this* or *that* ſort of Life, then has he *full Liberty* to chuſe for himſelf, and to proſecute his *own Happineſs* in what way or manner he ſhall think fit; which is exactly the Caſe of the *Atheiſt*.

It is the ſame thing, in effect, with thoſe who make *God* a *neceſſary Cauſe*, and *Men neceſſary Agents*: For, according to this Opinion, *all* Actions are *alike*, as being *equally neceſſary*, and every Man muſt be guided by *his own Determinations*; and then there can be *no general Rules*

Rules or *Principles* for Men to act by; there can be no ſuch thing as *Obligation*, *Reward* or *Puniſhment:* nor will any of *thoſe Notions* or *Diſtinctions*, which are taken away by *Atheiſm*, have any place or foundation under *this Hypotheſis*.

As to the Perſuaſion of thoſe who believe a *God*, acknowledge *ſome ſort of Providence*, and grant that *ſome regard* is due to the *ſovereign Author* and *Governour of the World*, but deny *a future State:* There ſeems indeed to be a conſiderable Difference between *this* and the *other* extravagant Suppoſitions; and ſo indeed there is, as to the *Credibility of the Opinion*, but the *Influence* it has *upon Practice* is very near the ſame; eſpecially with reſpect to thoſe of *theſe latter days*, to whom the *Certainty of a future State* hath been *more fully* diſcovered. For, if we conſider the *preſent Poſture* and *Conſtitution of Human Affairs*, and we believe that things have *always* gone on in the *ſame Courſe* from the beginning, without any *ſenſible extraordinary Interpoſition of Providence*, as they who deny all *Revelation* muſt believe; if, I ſay, we are of

this Opinion, and obſerve how things are managed in the World; how *Wickedneſs* oftentimes *thrives* and *flouriſhes*, and that not only *for a ſeaſon*, but ſo as to ſtrengthen and fix it ſelf upon as laſting Foundations as our Happineſs ſtands upon; and how, on the contrary, the *Calamities* and *Sufferings* of the *Righteous* are often commenſurate to their Lives, and a great many of them are meerly owing to their being Righteous; what Force or Power can ſome *ſlight Sentiments* of *Religion* have upon us, when the *preſent Happineſs of this Life* may be promoted by acting contrary to it, and we have nothing to *loſe* or *fear* after *Death?*

I ſhall not examine how far we are *oblig'd* to act in ſuch a caſe, upon the account of the *certain irreſiſtible Power of God*, which he may exert, if he will, tho' it ſhould be granted that he has not hitherto done it, or upon the account of the *Benefits* we may have received from him; but we ſhall find this true *in fact*, that thoſe who are *firmly perſwaded* that God *will* exert his Power no otherwiſe than he hath *done already*, will not, by thoſe *Puniſhments* which they ſee light Pro-

Promiſcuoſly, upon *all ſorts of Men*, at *different Times*, and in *different Circumſtances*, be deter'd from proſecuting the Deſigns which they have framed for the Attaintment, or Eſtabliſhment of their *own Happineſs*, by *any means* which they ſhall think likely to ſucceed.

Thus have I endeavour'd to give a true account, and *Repreſentation* of all kind of *Irreligion*, and to ſhew the *neceſſary Effects* of it, with reſpect to the *Happineſs of Mankind*.

And now, upon a fair and juſt compariſon of *Religion* and *Irreligion* together, according to the different *Notions*, and *Conſequences* of them, *Religion* muſt needs appear, not only *more agreeable* to the *Reaſon* and *true Intereſt* of *Men in general*, *more ſuitable* and *proportionate* to the *Capacities* and *Exigencies* of *Human Nature*; but *more conducive* to the *Happineſs of particular Men*, in the *preſent Conſtitution* and *State* of *human Societies* in the World; ſo that, upon a due Balance of all the uſual Accidents of Life, 'tis *very probable* that a *Religious Man* ſhould enjoy *more Happineſs* while he *lives here*, than a *Perſon of another Character:* as

might be fully and particularly made out if there was occaſion; but this requiring a ſet Diſcourſe, and not falling directly within my preſent Deſign, I think it ſufficient to mention ſome few general Conſiderations only, which ſhew the Advantages which a *Religious Man* has above another that acts by *contrary Principles*. Such as are theſe following:

He who acts upon a *true thorough Senſe* of *Religion*, hath, with reſpect to all the *external Enjoyments* of the World, *more contracted Deſires* and *fewer Wants* than another; and, conſequently, his Happineſs does more ſeldom interfere with any other Man's, and he is leſs obnoxious to the Aſſaults of *Envy*, *Ambition* or *Covetouſneſs*, than the *Wicked* in their Proſperity are.

He is not eager in the purſuit of the *neceſſary Supports*, and *leſſer Conveniencies* of Life, and he takes care to avoid all manner of *Injury* and *Offence* of others; and therefore he muſt be freer from the Effects of *Anger*, *Malice*, and *Revenge*, than ſuch as advance their own Eaſe or Fortune by diſquieting and robbing others: ——

He

He profeſſes to contribute all that he can to the *Happineſs* of *other Men*, without deſigning any Worldly Advantage to himſelf by it, upon which account a great many will find it their Intereſt to defend and ſecure him, and will perform ſeveral Offices of Kindneſs to him, in order to engage his future Endeavours for them when there ſhall be occaſion; whereas, he that is known to act for himſelf only, will be truſted and aſſiſted no further than his own preſent Intereſt is perceived unavoidably to concur with another Man's:

And laſtly, the Happineſs which a *Religious Man* propoſes to himſelf in *another Life* is ſuch, as, he is firmly perſuaded, exceeds all *Experience*, *Imagination*, or *poſſibility of Comprehenſion*; and conſequently, the *Hopes* of obtaining it, being ſtrong and vigorous in proportion to his Belief, muſt afford him *greater Pleaſure here* than the Hopes of *any other Enjoyment of this Life* could; and a well grounded Hope of the greateſt and happieſt Condition which a Man can frame to himſelf here, which is gradually increaſing, by a ſucceſsful Advance of the beſt laid Deſigns for the Attaintment of

it; is, I believe, compar'd with any *actual Enjoyment* whatſoever, the *higheſt pitch of Pleaſure* that we can be ſenſible of, without the *Proſpect* of a future State, which muſt ſo far exceed this, as the object of a Religious Hope is *greater*, and *more durable in the Poſſeſſion*, than any other, and as the preſent Aſſurance of injoying it is *leſs liable* to *Diſappointment* and *Defeat*; which it certainly is in many reſpects, there being no *external Accidents*, or *Humane Endeavours* which can deprive us of it.

This being the State and Condition of a *Religious Man*, he muſt be *generally* much happier than the *Wicked*, in *Truth* and *Reality*, tho' perhaps not in *their Judgment* of him; as *enjoying more Eaſe and Satisfaction in himſelf*, by a conſtant unalterable Succeſs in the purſuit of his main End; as being *leſs expoſed* to the *Injuries of others*, by reaſon of his aſſiſting ſome, and his taking due Care not to intrench upon the Happineſs of any; and as being *better able to bear* thoſe *real Calamities* and *Miſeries* which may happen to him, by a certain, comfortable expectation of *ſuch Happpineſs* as will *infinitely* outweigh *all* that he can ſuffer within the Compaſs of *this Life*.

This

This I think abundantly ſufficient for the proof and Eſtabliſhment of *Religion*: but, for a further confirmation of it, and that I may leave no room for the *Enemies of God, and Mankind* to glory in their Strength, as if they had as much to ſay for *their Opinions*, if they might be heard, as we have ſaid for ours;

V. I ſhall, in the next place, conſider the *Grounds* and *Pretences* of *Irreligion*; what *can be* urged in defence of it, and what are the *uſual Pleas* for it; and ſhall from thence ſhew the *Abſurdity*, and *Folly* of their conduct, who have no better *Reaſons* for what they believe, and do than thoſe which they allege, upon examination, will be found to be.

In the Proſecution of which Subject, I ſhall obſerve theſe Steps or Meaſures:

1. I ſhall enquire how far *Irreligion* is *capable of being proved*, what *Kind* or *Degree* of proof it admits of.
2. I ſhall conſider the *common Ways* and *Methods* of defending it.

3. I

3. I ſhall anſwer ſome of the *principal Objections* made uſe of againſt *Religion.*
4. I ſhall make ſome *general Reflexions* upon the *different Grounds*, and *Foundations*, which *Religion* and *Irreligion* ſtand upon, and the *different Conduct* of thoſe who act under the Influence of the *one* and the *other.*

1. *Firſt* then, I am to enquire how far *Irreligion* is *capable of Proof*; that is, how far a Man is *able* to prove that there is *no God, no Obligation of acting ſuch a way*, if there be, or *no future State of Happineſs, or Miſery.*

Were a Man diſpoſed to believe all, or any of this, or had he a mind to convince others, of the Truth of any of theſe Propoſitions, what way or Method could he take to ſatisfie either his own, or their Underſtanding? 'Tis plain, that none of the things enquired into, are Objects of *Senſe*, or *Internal Conſciouſneſs*; we cannot ſee with our Eyes, nor feel with any intimate Perception, that there is *no God, no Religion*, or *Future State*; and therefore, *no new Experiments*, or *Obſervations*

of

of this nature, nor any *old Teſtimonies*, or *Authorities*, grounded upon ſuch, have any place upon this Subject, any further than they furniſh Matter for *Reaſoning* and *Reflexion*; from whence we muſt immediately derive all the Knowledge that we can have of any of the Propoſitions in queſtion; all which being *negative*, there's no other way of proving the Truth of them, but by ſhewing, either their *Repugnancy*, or their *Diſagreeableneſs* to our *Reaſon*, and to thoſe *other Principles of our Knowledge*, which we *cannot poſſibly* doubt of; the firſt way we *demonſtrate* them to be *certain*, the latter we make them appear *probable*.

As to *Demonſtration*; there's no way of *demonſtrating* a thing *not to be*, but by proving, that 'tis impoſſible, and a *Contradiction* to *be*; and who will undertake to convince the World, that it is *impoſſible* there ſhould be a *God?* or ſuppoſing there be, that *Religion*, and a *Future State*, are *downright Contradictions*? What is there in any of theſe Notions that ſhocks our *Reaſon*, and reſtrains our *Aſſent?* What other *more certain* Knowledge have we, with which our Belief of theſe things is inconſiſtent? There was never

never any Proof of this kind offered, or pretended to yet; the Vanity of all ſuch Attempts being eaſily diſcoverable, upon the firſt Tryal of our Underſtandings that way.

All that remains then to be done, is, to produce ſuch Reaſons and Arguments for the *Doctrines of Irreligion*, and to ſhew ſuch Marks and Characters of Truth upon them, as ſhall render them *ſuitable* and *agreeable* to our Minds; ſo that, upon a fair Propoſal, we ſhall be *eaſily inclined* to *embrace*, and *aſſent to* them, tho' the Evidence be not ſo ſtrong, as *irreſiſtibly* to *determine us*.

This we call arguing from *Probability*; which is nothing elſe, but an *Appeal to the common Reaſon of Mankind*; ſo that what the *generality of Wiſe Men*, in *all Ages*, have, upon due examination, aſſented to, as *moſt agreeable* to *right Reaſon*, that opinion is *moſt probable*; and, in matters of *pure Reflection*, deduced from the *firſt Principles* of Knowledge, which are common to all Men alike, who have the ſame uſe of their Faculties, this muſt be acknowledged to be a very good *Rule*, and *Meaſure* of *Probability*: But *Atheiſm* and *Irreligion* will never ſtand this

this teſt; the wiſe, and learned part of the World having conſtantly rejected, and condemned them.

But, ſuppoſing the Diſquiſition were to begin *now*, and Men were to chuſe their Opinions again; how would a Perſon go about to prove, that 'tis *more agreeable* to *Reaſon*, and the *Nature of Things*, that there ſhould be *no God*, *no Religion*, nor *Future State*, than that there ſhould be any of theſe Things?

All the Arguments that can be made uſe of upon this occaſion, muſt be drawn, either from our *own Exiſtence*, and *Conſtitution*, or from the *Exiſtence*, *Frame*, and *Diſpoſition* of the *World*, and all things *without us*. We are *certain*, that we *are*, and we know not our *Original*, or by what *Power* we came at firſt to be: We perceive a great many things *without us*, the *Beginning* of which we know not, nor can we tell by what means they came to exiſt: Is it *therefore moſt likely*, and *probable*, that there ſhould be *no ſuch Being*, as that which we ſuppoſe to be the *Cauſe* of all theſe things, than that there *really is ſome ſuch perfect Being*, as we have before deſcribed, who was the *Author*

thor of all theſe Effects which we perceive? Can we, from the *Oeconomy of the World*, and the *Courſe of Nature*, infer, that there is *no governing* and *directing Power* in the *Univerſe*? Can we, from the *Frame* and *Diſpoſition of our own Minds*, prove, that we are under *no Law* or *Obligation* of acting? or that *Religion* is *deſtructive* of our *Happineſs*? Can we, from the *Circumſtances of our Nature*, or the *Conſtituiton of things without us*, make it *reaſonable* to think that we ſhall *not live again*, be *conſcious* of all our *former Actions*, and be *happy* or *miſerable* according to the *different Kinds* of them? However true theſe things *may*, or *are ſuppoſed to be in themſelves*, they will by no means *follow* from the *forementioned Principles*; and there can be *no other* but theſe imagined *antecedent* to them: For if *God*, *Religion*, and a *Future State*, are all *poſſible*, (as they muſt needs be acknowledg'd to be,) the *real Exiſtence* of *any thing elſe* will never furniſh any Argument for their *Non-exiſtence*.

2. In vain then do we expect any *direct Proof* of *Irreligion*. In the next place there-

therefore I ſhall conſider the *uſual Ways* and *Methods* of defending it; which are theſe Four.

Ridiculing Religion.

Requiring a *more certain Mathematical* proof of it.

Endeavouring to ſhew the *Poſſiblity* of things ſubſiſting *without it.*

And raiſing ſome *looſe Objections* againſt it, which chiefly aim at the *preſent Profeſſion* and *Practice* of it in the World.

1. As to the *Firſt* of theſe ways; 'tis certain that the *Generality* of thoſe who advance, or profeſs any of the foremention'd Opinions, contain'd under the Notion of *Irreligion*, are ſuch as *barely deny* the contrary Truths, without giving any Reaſon for their Disbelief: they ſpeak a bold thing againſt *God* and *Religion*, and ſo fall to their Sins, without ever examining the Truth of what they ſay; a *light Word* or *Phraſe* applied to a *ſerious Thing*, an *odd Simile* or *Compariſon*, a *ridiculous Turn* or *Alluſion* is all they pretend to. Now, there's nothing ſo well eſtabliſht, or confirm'd, but may be *ridicul'd*, tho' it cannot be *confuted*; and the greater

and

and more ſublime the Subject is, the fitter it is for *Burleſque*; the Boldneſs of the Raillery heightens the Wit of it. But I need not ſpend time to prove, that a *Jeſt* is no *Argument*: Beſides, I ſhall have occaſion to conſider the Perſons of this Character in another place, and ſo ſhall paſs on.

2. To the *Second* Way made uſe of by the Patrons of *Irreligion* to juſtifie their *Infidelity*; and that is, by alleging, that the *Doctrines of Religion*, and the *Proofs* given of it, have not *that Degree of Certainty* which they *ought* to have, in order to their Conviction. Why, ſay they, are not ſuch important Points as thoſe, in which the Happineſs of *Mankind* is ſo far concern'd, made as plain and evident to our Underſtandings *as any Propoſition in Mathematicks?* prove them to us in the *ſame manner* and we will believe them. The *Inſufficiency*, and *Abſurdity* of which Plea, will manifeſtly appear from theſe following Conſiderations.

For, firſt of all, 'tis very abſurd for Perſons to call for *more* and *greater* Proof of the Truth of a thing before they have confuted any one of thoſe Arguments that

that are already advanced; and therefore the Proof that has been given of Religion, whatever it be, is ſufficient, till it be overthrown by contrary Allegations.

In the next place, 'tis ridiculous to ask for *other Kind* of Proof than the *Nature of the Thing* in queſtion will bear; it being the ſame as to deſire, that the Nature of things ſhould be chang'd: and therefore to call for *Mathematical Demonſtration* in Points of *Religion*, is as much as to ſay, let *Religion* be turn'd into *Mathematicks*, and we will believe it; the Meaning of which is only this, that ſuch Men as theſe like *Mathematicks* better than they do *Religion*: For indeed the Perſons who call for this kind of Proof in *Religion*, will allow of no ſuch thing as *Demonſtration* any where but in *Numbers* and *Figures*; whereas we have as *clear Ideas* of *many other* things, and do as evidently perceive the *Agreement*, or *Diſagreement* of them, and make as *certain Deductions* from them: particularly, in the preſent Subject we are upon, we have as clear and diſtinct Notions of *Knowledge*, *Will*, *Power*, *Duration*, and all thoſe *other Original Ideas*, from whence

we took our firſt Riſe in the Proof of *Religion*, as we have of *Number* and *Figure*; we are alſo as certain of the Truth of thoſe Propoſitions, that *Nothing can make it ſelf*, that *Something muſt be eternal*, that *Motion muſt begin from Will*, and ſeveral other, from whence all our Arguments for *Religion* are deduced, as we are of ſuch *Mathematical Axioms* as theſe, that *the Whole is bigger than any of its Parts*, that when *equal Numbers are added to equal*, *the whole is equal*, and the like; and the *Deduction* of other Propoſitions from thoſe former is, in all the intermediate links of Connexion, as evidently perceived *there* as *here*, and the *main Concluſions* are as certain as any *Mathematical Concluſion*, at the *ſame Diſtance* from the *firſt Principles* of that kind of Knowledge, can be.

In the Proof of a *God* this is very plain; and if the *Obligations of Religion*, and a *Future State*, will not be allowed to have the *ſame degree of Evidence*, as the being of God hath, yet they have *all the Certainty 'tis conceivable they ſhould have*, by way of Deduction from any Ideas which our Minds are furniſht with; ſo that ſuppoſing them true, they cannot be proved

ved any otherwiſe, than they are from *bare unaſſiſted Reaſon*; and therefore, 'tis very unjuſt to require a *further Demonſtration* of them, when the *rational Grounds* which they ſtand upon, cannot be overthrown by *contrary Proofs*. I do not mention the additional Advantage of *Revelation*, becauſe that belongs to another place.

But, beſides all this, where we are under a *neceſſity* of *judging* one way, (as we are in all ſuch matters where it concerns our Happineſs to *act*, or *not to act*,) 'tis contrary to Reaſon not to be determined by *that degree of Evidence*, whatever it be, which appears on *one ſide*, when we have nothing on the *other ſide* to ballance it; and therefore it muſt be very fooliſh and abſurd to take the Party of *Irreligion*, for no other reaſon but this, that the *Proofs of Religion* have not *all that Strength* and *Evidence of Conviction* which *ſome other Truths ſeem* to have. And yet this is the only Defence that ſome People make for their *Impiety* and *Unbelief*.

3. But others there are who pretend to build their *Irreligion* upon *poſitive Prin-*

ciples; and for that end have made *new Schemes* or *Hypotheſes*, wherein they endeavour to explain the *original Diſpoſition*, and *Conduct* of things without a God; but all that they prove, is, that they who *only denied* the common Doctrines concerning *God*, *Providence*, &c. without advancing any other in their ſtead were the wiſer Men; For all theſe new Notions of theirs, either ſignifie *nothing at all*, or they *mean the ſame thing* as we do by a *God*, or elſe they are altogether *irrational* and *contradictory*.

What are *Fate*, *Neceſſity*, *Chance*, and *univerſal Soul*, but meer Covers for Ignorance, of the ſame kind as *occult Cauſes*? the true Reſult of all which Principles is a *new ſort of Creation*; where *all things* are made by *nothing*, or *nothing* is ſet up as the *efficient Cauſe* of *all things*.

But if thoſe who uſe any of theſe Names mean, by the *Maker* or *Cauſe* of all things, a *Being diſtinct* from the *things made*; *ſuch a Being* cannot be conceived without *all thoſe glorious Attributes* which make up *our Idea of God*. For, if we will allow the *original Author* of the World the *higheſt Perfections imaginable by us*, as his Work certainly required; if the

the *firſt great Cauſe* of all things had the *nobleſt Qualities we can conceive*, as the Effects produced by it ſufficiently declare; we muſt grant *this Author*, or *Cauſe* to be an *intelligent Being*, endued with *Knowledge* and *Will*: For 'tis *impoſſible* for *Man* to frame a Notion of *any Powers*, *Faculties*, or *Qualities*, *greater* or *nobler* than *theſe*; and 'tis eaſier to believe, that *ſome Man* of *more refined Intellectuals* made the World, than that any *other Cauſe*, which *wanted theſe Perfections*, could be the Author of it.

I ſhall not here enter into a more particular Diſquiſition of any *Scheme*, or *Hypotheſis*, which excludes the *Being of a God*; having conſider'd them all before, in the former part of this Diſcourſe, and ſhew'd them to be, in thoſe Points, where they mean any thing *diſtinct* from the *common Notions* which we have undertook to defend, very *abſurd* and *inconſiſtent*.

And indeed, the *Falſhood* and *Abſurdity* of *all theſe Schemes* and *Hypotheſes*, which pretend to give an account of the *Frame* and *State* of things *without a God*, or *independently of him*, are ſo manifeſt and notorious, that I am fully perſuaded a

Man may be able to prove them ſo, againſt a great diſproportion of Parts and Learning; but this is not my buſineſs at preſent, nor is there any occaſion for ſuch an Undertaking now.

For, ſhould we allow the *Atheiſt*'s *Scheme of things* to be *poſſible*, and *conſiſtent*, (which is the moſt that is pretended,) yet we are aſſured, by the *common Reaſon* of Mankind, that the Philoſophy of a God is *moſt rational*, without the Help of *Revelation*, and *univerſal Tradition* which confirm the Truth of it: and therefore the *Poſſibility* of another Hypotheſis cannot juſtify the Defenders of it, unleſs they can alſo make it appear to be *more reaſonable*, and *more fit to be believed*, than that which obtains; but the *Atheiſt* will never be able to give an *eaſier*, *juſter*, and *more ſatisfactory* account of *all the Phænomena* in the *Univerſe*, than *he* can who *owns a God*, if he ſhould offer at ſuch a thing, which is more than any one has ventured at yet.

And the ſame may be applied to others who *acknowledge a God*, and pretend to ſhew that there is *no ſuch thing* as *Religion* and a *Future State*: For they cannot ſay, that *God*, who *made the World*, and all

all things in it, is not able to *overſee* and *govern* the Works of his Hands; that He, who *gave Man his Being*, and *all his Faculties* and *Capacities*, *cannot require* him to *act* after ſuch a manner *while he lives*, or *cannot renew* him again *after Death*, and *continue* his Life to him, in *ſuch a State* as *he pleaſes to make agreeable*, or *diſagreeable* to him, and *as long as he pleaſes*: This is to bring Weakneſs out of Strength, to ſet Bounds to God within the acknowledg'd Sphere of his Power, and to ſay he *cannot do things* which are *leſs* than *thoſe* which he *can do*, and *has done*.

Nor can they prove, that 'tis *more agreeable* to the *Nature of God*, and to *all thoſe Notions* we have concerning *Him*, and *our ſelves*, that he *ſhould not* exerciſe his Power after this manner than that *he ſhould*. The utmoſt they pretend to prove, is, that 'tis *poſſible God may not do* all this that we conceive of him: as will plainly appear, if we conſider the chief Arguments made uſe of upon this occaſion; which are taken from the ſuppoſed *Materiality*, and *Mortality* of the *Soul*.

Here lies the *Principal Strength* of *Irreligion*; theſe are the *fundamental Principles*, which the whole Fabrick ſtands upon; and great Endeavours have been uſed to confirm the Truth of them. Now, 'tis plain to any Man, who duly conſiders theſe Notions, without that Confuſion and Ambiguity of Terms, which they are commonly delivered in, that 'tis *impoſſible* to prove, that the *Soul* is not ſomething *perfectly diſtinct* from *Matter*, and *Motion*, and all the *Modifications* of them, and that it cannot *ſubſiſt*, and *act after* the *Diſſolution of the Body*; nor are there any Arguments to be produced, which prove, that 'tis *more probable*, that the *Soul* ſhould be ſomething *material*, and be *diſſolved with the Body*, than that it ſhould be a *diſtinct Principle* and *ſurvive it*. All that can be urged in behalf of the former Opinions, is, that we *cannot*, from the Knowledge we have of the Qualities and Operations which we attribute to each, *certainly demonſtrate*, that what we term *Soul* and *Body*, are *two diſtinct Subſtances*; tho', at the ſame time, it muſt be confeſs'd, that Men have been, *generally*, *more diſpoſed* to believe *this*, than the *contrary* Opinion; and 'tis *as*

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demonſtrable that the *Soul* is not any *Mode*, *Compoſition*, or *Reſult* of the *Qualities*, which we aſcribe to *Body*, as it is that *any Idea* we have in our Minds is *not any other*.

Allowing then that it is *poſſible*, that whatever we aſcribe to *Body* and *Soul ſeparately*, may be *united* in *one common Subject*; and that *this common Subject*, doth, by *Death*, loſe thoſe *Capacities*, and *Powers*, which we attribute to the *Soul*, in the ſame manner as it is diveſted of *Motion*; ſuppoſing, I ſay, this, which is the moſt that can be ſuppoſed; from hence indeed it follows, that it is *poſſible*, that the *ſame common Subject* may never ſubſiſt in the ſame manner it did before, as we grant 'tis poſſible, that what is now at reſt, may never be in motion again: But then it is as *poſſible* alſo that it *may*: God *may*, if he pleaſes, put us together again after death, in ſuch a manner, that we ſhall feel our ſelves to be the ſame that we were before we died, and ſhall be conſcious of all our former Life; and that he *will* do ſo we have a great deal of reaſon to think, tho' we had not any aſſurance of it from *Revelation*, as has before been proved, And therefore the Arguments

guments which are brought for the *Materiality*, and *Mortality* of the *Soul*, let them have all the Weight and Certainty, which they are imagined to have by thoſe who urge them, are wholly trifling and inſignificant, with reſpect to what they are brought to prove: For no *new Diſcoveries* are hereby made of the *Will* and *Deſign* of *God*; and, conſequently, the Proof that has now been given of *Religion*, and a *Future State*, will have the ſame Force and Evidence ſtill, tho' the *Soul* ſhould be granted to be *Material*, and *Mortal*: And we ſhould ſtill have the ſame Reaſon to believe, that *God does require us to act* after ſuch a manner, and that he *will reward*, or *puniſh* us, in *another Life*, according as we behave our ſelves in *this*; becauſe the *Arguments* here made uſe of in the Proof of this Point, are not taken from the *Immaterial*, and *Immortal Nature* of our Souls, but from what we *certainly*, *by infallible Conſciouſneſs*, *know* of *our ſelves*, and from what, by *evident Demonſtration* we *collect* concerning the *Nature of God*, which every Man who owns ſuch a Being muſt aſcribe to him.

Thus

Thus have I examined the Pretences of thoſe Adverſaries of Religion, who take upon them to eſtabliſh *new Principles* and *Hypotheſes*, to explain the State and Conſtitution of things by; and have ſhewn, that the utmoſt they aim at, is, to make it *ſeem poſſible*, that *thoſe Appearances* in the World, from whence we infer the *Being of a God*, *Religion*, and a *Future State*, *may* be *otherwiſe* accounted for; and that they do not ſo much as endeavour, either to *deſtroy our Scheme*; or, upon a juſt compariſon in all Points, to ſhew, that *theirs* is a *more rational* Syſtem, than ours.

But moſt of the Profeſſors and Favourers of *Irreligion*, with whom we are now, in *theſe latter Times*, concerned, are ſuch as never trouble themſelves with *Schemes* and *Hypotheſes*; They come by their Opinions much eaſier, and maintain them with leſs expence of Argument. Some *looſe Objection* againſt *any Notion*, or *Doctrine* which goes under the name of *Religion*, or whatever has *any Relation* to it is enough for their turn: They never examine what is the juſt Inference that may be drawn from what they Object, or what Anſwer may be given to it, but im-

immediately condemn *all Religion* for the ſake of ſome *little remote Conſequence*, which their Imagination repreſents to them as inconſiſtent with it.

3. Some of the principal of which Objections I ſhall anſwer very briefly, and expoſe the Abſurdity of them; which is the Buſineſs I propoſed to my ſelf under the Third of thoſe Heads, into which I divided my Diſcourſe, concerning the *Grounds*, and *Pretences* of *Irreligion*.

The *chief* and *moſt common* Objections againſt *Religion* are theſe:

Myſteries, *Inconſiſtencies*, and *Abſurdities* in Scripture;

Extravagant Notions, and *pernicious Doctrines*, maintain'd under the *Name of Religion*;

Variety of Opinions, and *Cenſures* of one another, among thoſe who profeſs to own the ſame *common Principles* of Faith, and argue from them;

Fooliſh

Fooliſh, and *ridiculous Arguments*, brought by ſome in the Defence of true Opinions;

The *Scandalous Lives* of great Pretenders to Piety and Vertue, and of ſuch as are peculiarly deſign'd to promote the Practice of them among others;

Religion the *Effect of Fear*, and *Education*;

Religion a *meer politick Contrivance.*

As to the firſt of theſe Objections; I ſhall conſider it no farther than as it is made uſe of, to weaken the Credibility of *all Religion*; and 'tis ſufficient to expoſe the Weakneſs of it, to ſhew the Argument barely with its Conſequences, which is this; Such a *Paſſage* in *Scripture* I cannot *underſtand*, or *reconcile* to another, or ſuch a *Story*, or *Account* of Matter of Fact, *does not agree* with my Knowledge of things of the like Nature, therefore *this Paſſage*, or *Account is falſe*, therefore the *Book* in which it was found is *falſe*, therefore *all the ſeveral Books in the whole Bible*, which were writ by *ſeveral Men*, in *ſeveral Places* of the World, and at *ſeveral Times*, during the ſpace of about

bout two thouſand Years, are *all falſe*; therefore there is *no God*, or *no Obligation* of obeying him if there be, or *no Future State*.

Moſt of the *particular Cavils* againſt *Scripture*, have been fully anſwered by thoſe who have purpoſely undertook the Defence of *Revelation* : but it is ſufficient at preſent to ſay, that nothing of this kind proves any thing againſt the Truth of *Scripture in general*, much leſs againſt the *firſt Fundamental Principles of Religion*, which I have endeavoured to eſtabliſh.

The next thing objected againſt the Truth of Religion, is ; that there are Several *abſurd* and *pernicious Doctrines* propoſed to the World, *under the Name of Religion*, and warmly contended for, by thoſe who believe, and maintain them.

Some Men place all their *Religion* in *Shew* and *Pageantry*, their Worſhip is all Theatrical, and a great deal of their Faith and Diſcipline, extravagant and Romantick ; therefore *all Religion* is *Prieſt-craft*, and *all Scripture Legend*, ſaith the *Atheiſt* ; but *Socrates* and *Plato* would

would not have argued thus; thoſe wiſer Heathens, tho' they laught at the *Gods*, and *Devotion* of the *People of their Times*, did not therefore turn *Atheiſts*, but employed the Strength of their Reaſon in ſearching out *higher Notions of God*, and in framing to themſelves a *more rational Religion*.

Bigotry and *Superſtition* have oftentimes produced as dreadful and pernicious Conſequences to a Country or Nation, as the wild Liberties and Extravagancies of *Atheiſm* could do: but what's that to *Religion*, which ſuffers equally both ways, and is no more the *Cauſe* or *Occaſion* of the *one*, than the *other? Cruelty* and *Revenge*, and all Actions tending to the *miſchief*, or *Deſtruction* of Mankind, are as *contrary* to the *Nature of Religion* when exerciſed by a *ſuperſtitious Zealot*, as when practiſed by an *Atheiſt*; tho' the former covers them with the name of Religion, and the latter does not: and therefore *true Religion* is very unjuſtly and unreaſonably condemn'd upon this account.

Another fooliſh Objection is taken from that *variety of Opinions* which is found among

mong the *Profeſſors of Religion*, and their *peremptory Cenſures* of one another, for holding falſe and abſurd Doctrines.

What a ſtrange *Diſagreement* is there among Men in *Points of Religion*? Say thoſe that have none at all. *Some* believe *one thing*, and *ſome another*; *ſome* expound *Scripture* in *this* Senſe, and *ſome* in *that*; *Creed* is ſet up againſt *Creed*, and *Altar* againſt *Altar*; what *one* Man thinks his *Duty*, *another* apprehends *Damnation* from. Suppoſing then we have our Opinions to chuſe, what is to be done in ſuch a Caſe? ſhall we take the *ſtrongeſt Side*, what the *moſt*, or what, we think the *wiſeſt* believe? or ſhall we examine the Reaſons of *all Sides impartially, without Prejudice*, and let our Judgments be determined by the *greateſt Appearance of Evidence*? No, we will do none of all this; but, without examining their ſeveral Pleas, we will take up Opinions quite *different* from *all of them*: and becauſe *one* Man denies *one* thing, and *another* another, that we may be ſure to be free from thoſe Errors which they condemn one another for, we will *deny* what *no Body elſe* does, what *all the different Parties* ſubſcribe to, and *agree* in. Theſe

are

are the Reſolutions of the *Irreligious*; and what a ſtrange Contradiction is this, to make *Unity of Conſent*, the *Character of Truth*, and yet to allow no Opinions to be true, but thoſe that have the *leaſt pretence* to it?

Neither is it more juſt and reaſonable, to condemn *all Religion* upon the account of the *weak Defence*, and Patronage of *ſome of its Profeſſors*. What if the *Atheiſts* ſhould be able to defeat ſome trifling Argument of *ignorant well-meaning Honeſty*, or *ſuperſtitious Zeal*? to triumph preſently, and cry out that *Ignorance*, or *Phrenſy* was the Mother of *all Devotion*, would be as fooliſh a Boaſt, as for a General to deſpiſe the *Weakneſs* and *Cowardice* of his Enemy, becauſe he had plundered two or three ſmall open Villages, when all the Great Towns, and the chief Strength of the Kingdom had been unaſſaulted, or attempted in vain.

The *ſcandalous Practices of Men of great Pretences to Piety*, and *ſuch* as, by their *peculiar manner of Life*, are look'd upon to be *wholly in the Intereſts of Religion*, is another very unwarrantable Occaſion of

ſome Mens disbelieving every thing that goes under that Name: who infer from hence, that ſuch Perſons as theſe do not believe Religion *themſelves*, and conſequently there's no more Reaſon to think that *others* do, tho' they diſguiſe their Notions better, in order to ſerve their preſent Intereſt; eſpecially if they be Men of ſuch Senſe as is ſufficient to put them above the ſuſpicion of *vulgar Credulity*. But this Argument is *falſe*, and *unconcluding* in *all its Parts*.

For, Firſt of all, it does not follow, That ſuch Men as theſe believe nothing *themſelves* of what they profeſs; the *truer Inference* is, That *corrupt Nature*, *vicious Habits*, and a *looſe Education* are oftentimes too hard for *Conſcience* and *Reaſon*, it being very plain that the ſame thing happens in ſeveral other Caſes. For there's *no Man* whatſoever, be his Principles never ſo looſe and wide, and his Reaſon never ſo much deprav'd, but ſhall many times do what he himſelf ſhall condemn himſelf for doing, and which contradicts the Principles which he reſolv'd to ſtand by: and therefore, for a Man to infer from *ſome groſs Sins of a Pretender to Religion*, that he does *not believe* any thing

thing of what he profeſſes, is as abſurd as to prove, that an *Atheiſt* does certainly *believe a God*, whatever he ſays to the contrary, becauſe he often *ſwears by him*, and *invokes him* in his *Curſes*.

Beſides, ſuppoſe this true of *ſome* Men who pretend to a great Senſe of Religion themſelves, or undertake to promote it in others, that they *do not believe* any thing of it; as there are ſometimes Preſumptions ſtrong enough to induce us to judge ſo; what reaſon have we from hence to conclude, that *others*, of a more unſuſpected Conduct, are all of the ſame mind, if we could but ſee to the Bottom of them? or, what if there be a great many *falſe Pretenders* to *Religion?* how is this an *Argument* againſt the *Truth* of it? we have no reaſon indeed to believe it upon their Word; nor does their contradicting what they ſay by their Practice give us any more reaſon to disbelieve it. Nor, if *ſome of thoſe*, whoſe *peculiar Employment it is*, and whoſe *preſent Intereſt* it *ſeems* to be, to propagate and advance the Belief of *Religion* in the World, ſhould be ſuppoſed to believe nothing of it *themſelves*, would it follow from hence, that their Unbelief was occaſion'd by

knowing more of it's falſhood than others, and by being better acquainted with the whole *Myſtery* and *Contrivance:* this is evidently proved to be falſe by the Experience of thoſe, who have thought more, and enquir'd further concerning theſe things than the reſt of the World have done; for the *more they have conſider'd* the fundamental Doctrines of Religion, and the *more juſt and exact* they have been in tracing, and examining all their Reaſonings about them, the *ſtronger* have they been confirm'd in the Belief of them. But if there *really are* any ſuch Men, as, for argument's ſake, we have now *ſuppoſed*, they were certainly *Atheiſts before* they put on the *Garb of Religion:* and what ſhould hinder an *Atheiſt* from taking up this Diſguiſe, and preparing himſelf for it by a cloſe Diſſimulation, who thinks all Means lawful for the promoting his preſent Intereſt in this World; and 'tis not every Atheiſt's good fortune to be better provided for in *another Condition of Life*, than he might probably be by *acting a Religious Part.*

But,

But, if the *Generality* of *all ſorts* of Men muſt be allow'd *really to believe* the *Religion* they *profeſs*, this, ſays the *Unbeliever*, is the Reaſon of it; A ſtrange prevalence of *Fear*, and ſtrong Impreſſions of *Education* have captivated their Underſtandings, and diſpoſed them all to the ſame way of Reaſoning. Upon this account it is that there have been ſo few true Philoſophers, who were able to think rightly, and judge clearly of things; But now and then ſome bold Genius has ventured to ſhake off his Chains, and aſſert the *Liberty* and *Prerogative* of *human Nature*; and as *one Alexander*, or *Cæſar*, ſo *one Epicurus*, or *Lucretius* is enough for an Age: ſuch Spirits are not of the *common Make*, and appear in the World but ſeldom, and are therefore to be admired. To which it may be ſufficient to anſwer, that I have already proved *Religion* to be the *neceſſary Iſſue* and *Product of Reaſon*, and of the *firſt unqueſtionable Principles* of *all our Knowledge*; and therefore, *whatever elſe* is aſſigned as a *Cauſe* of it muſt be *falſe*.

But I have theſe further Conſiderations to add, *viz.* that the Effects of *Fear*

and *Education* never are ſo uniform, laſting and univerſal as the Belief of Religion is obſerved to be, eſpecially when they operate contrary to the *Truth* and *Reaſon* of things, as they are ſuppoſed to do in this caſe; That Men are as much, and as often, diſpoſed to *deny*, as to *believe* what they *fear*, when the *Grounds* and *Reaſons* for fear are the ſame, and are more inclin'd to the former, when the things feared are repreſented at a great Diſtance; That *ſenſual Appetites*, *Habits of indulging them*, *preſent Enjoyments*, or *near Proſpects of Pleaſure*, and *Cuſtoms of living contrary to the Rules of Religion*, have a much ſtronger and more powerful Influence upon the Judgments of Men, than ſuch Impreſſions of *Fear*, or *Education* which contradict all theſe; eſpecially if *Reaſon* be of the *ſame ſide* with them, as the Patrons of Irreligion muſt ſay; And therefore, neither *Fear*, nor *Education*, nor *both* together, can be the *true Cauſe* of ſuch a *general Belief* of *Religion* as is profeſs'd in the World; nor any thing elſe but the *Reaſon* and *Evidence* of the *things believed*.

The laſt Objection I ſhall mention, which

which the *Atheiſt* thinks the moſt formidable of all, and a perfect Diſcovery of the whole Myſtery, is, That *Religion* is a *Politick Contrivance.*

Now, that which gives occaſion for ſuch a Suſpicion, is, That all the eminent Politicians, in their wiſe Precepts of Advice, have thought it neceſſary for every Prince to encourage and promote *Religion* in his Country, and to have a Shew of it himſelf, whatever his inward Sentiments were. But *this* is ſo far from being any Plea for Atheiſm, that 'tis a very ſtrong Argument for the *Truth*, *Reaſonableneſs*, and *Neceſſity of Religion*: For that is certainly highly rational, which is moſt ſuitable and agreeable to the *publick Reaſon of Mankind*, conſidered together *in Society*; without which there would be little Uſe of *Reaſon* at all. And, if Men are *born ſociable Creatures*, if they *naturally deſire Society*, and Society cannot poſſibly ſubſiſt without *Religion*, as the Objection it ſelf ſuppoſes, then is *Religion* as *agreeable* to the *Nature of Man*, and as *neceſſary* to his *Happineſs* as *Converſation*, and *living together*. And were it not for *other Mens* having *Religi-*

on, the *Atheiſt* would find it very uncomfortable living in the World.

Theſe are the chief *Pleas*, *Defences*, and *Objections* commonly urg'd and inſiſted upon, by the *Enemies of Religion*. And, if there be any other, which have not been here particularly conſidered, they admit of the ſame Anſwers as are given to thoſe which are here mentioned, or they may be as eaſily accounted for out of the Proofs before laid down, concerning the *Truth* and *Certainty* of *Religion*; and therefore, without ſpending more time in making *little Cavils*, and *groundleſs Suſpicions*, look conſiderable by a formal Examination and Anſwer of them, I ſhall paſs to the

4. Next thing I propoſed to do, in order to ſhew the Abſurdity and *Folly* both of the *Principles* and *Practice* of thoſe, who *reject* the great, and important Truths of *Religion*; and that is to make ſome *general Reflexions* upon the *different Grounds* and *Foundations*, which *Religion* and *Irreligion* ſtand upon, and the *different Conduct* of thoſe, who act under the Influence of the one and the other.

Now,

Now, upon a ſtrict and impartial Review of what has been offered in this Cauſe, we ſhall find, that all the ſeveral Propoſitions, contained under the Notion of *Religion*, have been proved to be *true*, and *agreeable to our Reaſon*, by a *direct Deduction* from the *firſt Principles of our Knowledge*; which Deduction, in moſt of the Parts of it, has all the Certainty that any conſequential Truths can have, and where there is not *abſolute Certainty*, there is as much Evidence as the Nature of the things proved is capable of, in the preſent Condition and Circumſtances of our Being, and ſuch as the Mind fully aſſents to, without being able to entertain the leaſt Suſpicion of a Miſtake, 'tho it cannot prove there is not a bare Poſſibility of Error.

It will likewiſe appear that *Religion* is, in all the particular Branches and Duties of it, admirably *fitted* for the promoting the *Happineſs* of *Mankind in general*, conſidering their *preſent State* and Condition in the World: And further, it will be found to be very probable at leaſt, if not evident, that the greateſt degree of Happineſs, which every *particular* Man is capable

pable of, will be the Conſequence of his regular Diſcharge of all the Obligations of Religion, and that *proportionably* to a Man's *Behaviour*, in *this reſpect*, while *he lives*, ſhall his *Reward* be in *another State*; but in every proportion greater than can be conceived, or imagined by us now.

And as the Truth of theſe Matters will appear to be made out from the *Reaſon* and *Nature of things*; ſo will it be further manifeſt, that the *general Opinion of the World* has always gone the ſame way: and, if *Teſtimony*, or *Authority* could be of any uſe here, that the beſt, and the greateſt is on this Side.

Beſides, we ſhall not only be ſatisfied of theſe things by a *poſitive direct Proof*; but we ſhall ſee the *contrary Hypotheſes* proved *abſurd* and *impoſſible*; or, where any thing *poſſible* is advanced, we ſhall perceive it to be *leſs probable* in *it ſelf*, and the *Conſequences* drawn from it, to be *falſe* and *ridiculous*.

We ſhall likewiſe be convinc'd, that *Libertiniſm*, and *Irreligion*, do evidently and directly tend to the *Miſery of Mankind in general*, with reſpect to the *State* they *are now in*, and that every Man who acts

acts by these Principles, will very probably, if not certainly, be inconceivably miserable in *another State* of Life, in *proportion* to his *Neglect*, or *Violation* of the Duties prescribed by Religion.

On the contrary, we shall find, That the *Doctrines of Irreligion* have *none of those Grounds of Credibility*, nor *are*, or *can* be defended by *any of those Ways*, or *Methods*, by which Religion is establish'd:

That they consist wholly in the *Denial* and *Contradiction* of other Propositions, and therefore do not admit of any *positive direct* Proof, but must be proved by a Confutation of the Assertions denied;

That the *Assertions denied* by the Irreligious, cannot be shewed to be *false*, either from their *Repugnancy*, or their *Disagreeableness* to our *Reason*, and the *antecedent Principles* of our Knowledge; or from their *Inconsistence* with our *Happiness*; or from the *common Suffrage*, and *Testimony of Mankind*;

And that the *negative Principles of Irreligion*, and the *practical Consequences* of them cannot, upon a *just Comparison*, be proved to be more *suitable* to our *Reason*, or

or *Happineſs*, than the contrary *Doctrines* are.

We ſhall likewiſe, upon a ſlight Review of the *common Arguments*, and *Pleas* that are brought for *Irreligion*, be eaſily ſatisfied, that nothing of all this is ſo much as pretended to; but that the ſtrongeſt Effort of human Invention that way, reaches no further than an *Offer at explaining* the *Original*, *Order*, *Courſe*, and *Event* of things, either *without a God*, or *independently of him*, or with *Excluſion to* thoſe particular Conſequences reſpecting Men, which go under the Name of *Duty* and *Sin*, *Reward* and *Puniſhment*; and that the moſt which any Endeavours of this kind can amount to, is, to ſhew, that 'tis *poſſible* things *may be*, after that particular manner in which they are explained to be.

Theſe are the *different Grounds*, and *Proofs* of *Religion* and *Irreligion*: And if we carefully compare them together, it will eaſily appear, that they do not only differ as *more*, or *leſs rational*; but that *all the Reaſon* lies on the ſide of *Religion*; the *Conception*, or *Proof* of a *bare Poſſibility* of the World's ſubſiſting *without* any ſuch thing, being no manner of Argument

ment that there *is none*. And therefore it muſt be very abſurd to deny *all the Principles of Religion*, and every thing that is offered in defence of them, upon *this account only*.

But allowing that there may be a great deal more than this ſaid for *Irreligion*, ſo as to render it *ſomething probable* to be believed; yet if the *poſitive direct Proofs* for *Religion* ſtand good, without conſidering thoſe which pretend to ſhew the *Abſurdity*, and *Impoſſibility* of a *contrary Scheme*, the *former* cannot ſtand upon *ſo ſure* and *firm* a *bottom* as the *latter*, nor be advanced to *ſo high a degree of Credibility*; and therefore it muſt be very unreaſonable to give our aſſent on that ſide, where there is the *leaſt Appearance* of *Probability*.

Nay further, ſhould we ſuppoſe the *Proof* on both ſides to be *equal*, yet *ſuch different Conſequences* do attend the Belief of the *one* and the *other*, that 'tis the Extremity of Madneſs and Folly, to prefer the *Party of Irreligion*: Which, beſides the *preſent Pains*, *Troubles*, and *Diſadvantages* it is ſaid to bring upon the Perſons who make this Choice, and the *Miſchiefs* and *Inconveniencies* which *Mankind* will cer-

certainly ſuffer from one another upon this account; beſides all this, I ſay, it is threatned with *eternal, inexpreſſible Miſery* to come *after this Life.* And this is a Conſequence ſo concerning and dreadful, that it muſt be a *vaſt Preponderancy of Proof* that can juſtifie our running the hazard of it; which I am ſure, is more than any Man that makes the venture, can pretend to.

I do not here argue, that a Man ought to prefer *Religion* before *Irreligion* meerly becauſe 'tis *ſafer* ſo to do; becauſe, by the *Confeſſion of all Parties*, a Man ſhall not ſuffer any thing in another ſtate by ſuch a Choice, whereas he that chuſes *Irreligion* has only his *own Opinion* for his ſecurity, and is threatned by the Perſons of a contrary Perſuaſion with *eternal Miſery* after Death: I do not think *this alone*, a *ſufficient* reaſon to determine a Man's Choice to one ſide, againſt all other Arguments to the contrary; for then a Man might be threatned out of *any thing*: but, if the Evil threatned be *very conſiderable*, and 'tis *full as probable*, that it ſhould happen, as it is that it ſhould not, which is the Caſe now ſuppoſed, he acts very rationally and wiſely, who chuſes rather

to

to undergo *ſome leſſer Inconveniencies* at *preſent*, than to put himſelf *in danger* of *greater*. Now, that the *Miſery* annex'd to *Irreligion* is *very conſiderable*, cannot be denied, it being repreſented as much greater than can be *imagined* or *conceived* by us: and that this *Miſery ſhould* be the Portion of all thoſe who believe and act by ſuch Principles, is as likely, as it is that it ſhould not be ſo, whatever *Hypotheſis* be allowed.

For if the World were made by chance, notwithſtanding all the *Characters of Wiſdom* we behold in it, why may it not as well happen, that there ſhould be a *Future State*, and that thoſe whom we call *Irreligious* ſhould be *miſerable* in it, and the *Religious Happy*? It looks indeed like *Wiſdom*, and ſo does the *Regularity of the World*, and a great many *conſtant Diſcriminations* made there. Why ſhould the Wind blow down the *rotten* Fruit, and leave the *ſound*? Why ſhould the Plague ſweep away *ſome*, and leave *others* in the ſame City or Houſe? but (it may be anſwered) there are *natural Reaſons* and *Cauſes* for theſe things: And ſo there may be for the other, for ought we know; the *Wicked* may be *peculiarly diſpoſed* to be

be *miſerable*; the ſame *Temper* and *Conſtitution* of *Body* or *Soul*, which inclined them to be *wicked*, may render them *miſerable* alſo when they *live again*, and there is *as much Chance* for their *living again*, as their was for there *firſt Being*.

But if all things exiſt by *Neceſſity*, then a *Future State* may be *neceſſary* too, and the *Wicked* may be *neceſſarily miſerable* in it, for any thing there is in *this Hypotheſis* to the *contrary*.

Where *every thing* is ſuppoſed *caſual*, or *every thing neceſſary*, 'tis impoſſible to give *any reaſon*, why any thing that may be conceived to be, *ſhould*, or *ſhould not exiſt*; or *ſhould*, or *ſhould not* be, after *ſuch*, or *ſuch a manner*; and therefore all things of this nature muſt be *equally probable*; becauſe nothing can be alleged to determine the Mind *one* way, *rather* than *another*.

But, if there be a *God*, and the *World*, and *all things* that *are*, *have been*, or *are to be*, are acknowledged to be the *Effects* of *his Will*, there are no Reaſons to perſuade us, that 'tis *more probable* that *God will not puniſh the Wicked* in *another State* than

than that he *will*; at leaſt they have not yet been produced.

From whence it follows, That, it being *equally probable* in *every Hypotheſis*, that the Irreligious will be *extreamly miſerable*, they have by *their own Confeſſion*, and *Account of things*, *no more reaſon* to chuſe *that ſide* they are of, than the *other*; and therefore, in *this Caſe*, a Man muſt not *act at all*, or, if he does, the *general Opinion of others* concerning the *ſafeſt ſide*, ſhould direct him which way he is to act.

But moreover, it is not only *as probable*, that the *Irreligious* ſhould be *miſerable* in a *Future ſtate*, as not, allowing *any of their own Hypotheſes* to be *true*; but, by their own way of Proof, it appears, that *our Hypotheſis* is *as likely* to be true, as *any other* advanced by *them*, nothing further than a *Poſſibility* of *theirs* being aim'd at.

And not only ſo; but *we* do alſo pretend, by *many direct* and *poſitive Arguments*, to evince the *Certainty* of *ours*; and at the ſame time to ſhew *all theirs* to be *abſurd* and *impoſſible*.

Wherefore, if, upon an *equal Probability* we ought to take the *ſafeſt* meaſures,

much more are we obliged ſo to do, when *Reaſon* and *Happineſs* are *both* of the *ſame Side.*

Nay farther, He who chuſes *that Faith* and *Practice*, againſt which *Eternal Miſery in another State* is denounc'd, ought to have, not only *more Grounds of Probability*, but *Certainty* and *Evidence of Conviction* of his ſide; he ſhould be *fully* ſatisfied, from *certain direct Principles*, that his *own Opinions* are *right*, or that the *contrary* are *abſurd* and *irrational*: becauſe the *Conſequences* are of that *vaſt importance*, that the *preſent Inconveniencies* which we are *like* to ſuſtain, by acting a *contrary way*, can bear *no proportion* to the *hazard* or *likelihood of Miſery* that attends our *acting* this way.

Thus do we of the *Proteſtant Faith*, defend our ſelves againſt the *Papiſts*, when they *peremptorily condemn* us to *everlaſting Miſery*, for being of *contrary Opinions* to *theirs*, without meeting with the ſame Returns from us, and then urge us to take the *ſafeſt ſide*: Thus, I ſay, do we anſwer; did we believe *their Opinions* or *Cenſures* to be *probable*, tho' 'twas *poſſible*, and to us perhaps ſeem'd *as probable*, or *more ſo*, that they might be *falſe*, we would

would *then* allow ſome Weight in the Argument: But we do not *now* go over to them upon the account of *Safety*, becauſe we not only *think our Opinions certain*, and *theirs impoſſible*, *abſurd*, or *irrational*, and are fully perſuaded that we have *proved* them ſo; but, ſuppoſing our ſelves to err in all the Points in controverſie between us, we think it *demonſtrable* from *common Principles*, own'd on *both ſides*, that none of theſe *Errors* if they ſhould be ſuch, which, upon due care taken to inform our ſelves better, are believed by us *as Truths*, can expoſe us to the *hazard of Damnation*, if in all things elſe we live up to the Principles of our Religion. And if the *Atheiſt* can make the *ſame Defence* for himſelf; if the *Doctrines of Religion*, and the *ſuppoſed Conſequences of Irreligion* ſeem *as abſurd* and *contrary to all the Principles of his Knowledge*, owned by him, as the *Popiſh Tenets* do to a *Proteſtant*; or *as ridiculous* and *unwarrantable* as the *Viſions*, *Reſveries*, or *Predictions* of every little *Enthuſiaſt*, or *Fortune-teller*, to a Man of *calm*, *ſedate Senſe*; and if he be able to make this good in the *uſual ways* and *methods* of *Reaſoning*, then may he deſpiſe our *Threatnings*, and

laugh at the *Miſery of a Future State ſecurely.*

But for Men to deny all theſe important Truths, without offering at any Proof of their Falſhood; to ſay they are doubtful and uncertain Points, and yet to act with the ſame Aſſurance and Security, as if they were certainly falſe; to refuſe their Aſſent to them for want of greater and more evident Proof, without confuting the Arguments already advanced, or producing ſtronger on the contrary ſide; to laugh at the Terrors of the Lord, without proving them firſt to be vain or reſiſtible; to contradict the general Belief of the World, without making any new Diſcoveries, or Obſervations; to lay aſide a whole Scheme and Syſtem of things, which has been proved and eſtabliſhed in all the principal Branches and Connexions of it, becauſe they are not able to comprehend, or account for ſome little remote Conſequence; and to venture eternal Miſery upon a ſeeming Poſſibility of an Eſcape, which very few perceive or allow: Theſe are all egregious Inſtances of the *abſurd Faith*, and *fooliſh Conduct* of the *Enemies of Religion*; and conſequently good Proofs of the

Judg-

Judgment and Wiſdom of thoſe, who believe and act upon *contrary Grounds* and *Meaſures*.

There's another thing alſo which the *Atheiſt* commonly diſcovers his Folly in, and that is the *publiſhing* and *propagating* his Opinions: For, 'tis more the *Atheiſt*'s Intereſt, that *other* People ſhould have *Religion*, than it is any *Religious Man*'s. For, *his whole Happineſs* being in *this Life*, the more *other* People are reſtrain'd, and the better *they* are perſuaded, that *he* acts by the ſame Rules which *they* do, the larger will *his Liberty* and *Advantages* be, and the *leſs he* will ſuffer from their Deſigns and Purſuits; whereas the *Religious Man's Reverſion* is not endanger'd, but confirm'd by what he loſes, or ſuffers *here*.

Other Proofs likewiſe, of the *Unreaſonableneſs*, and *Abſurdity* of *Irreligion*, might be brought from the *Inconſiſtency* both of the *Faith* and *Practice* of thoſe who are profeſs'd Favourers of it: ſuch as their Credulity and Readineſs of Belief in *common* indifferent Matters, and their embracing abſurd Opinions, which are exploded by all the World beſides, when at the ſame time they are diſtruſtful of

every thing upon the Subject of *Religion*; their believing Matters which concern their preſent Happineſs upon weaker Grounds; their expoſing themſelves to greater Troubles and Inconveniencies, and running greater Hazards upon a faint Proſpect of future Happineſs in this Life; and ſometimes, on the contrary, fearing and avoiding things upon a leſs Appearance or Likelyhood of Danger, than what *Religion* affords; and laſtly, their acting contrary to their own Principles, and denying themſelves what they eſteem ſubſtantial Pleaſure and Satisfaction, out of a regard to imaginary Notions, which have no Foundation but in the Opinion of Men. But, theſe being Matters of common Obſervation, and too long to be fully inſiſted upon here, I ſhall think it ſufficient to have hinted at them, and ſo paſs on to the,

VI. Sixth and laſt general Branch of my Diſcourſe propoſed in the beginning of it, and that is, To give ſome Account of the *Cauſes* of *Atheiſm* and *Irreligion*, or the *Reaſons* which induce Men to take up ſuch Opinions.

There

There is nothing which People are better ſatisfied of, than of the Power and Influence of *Prejudices*, and *falſe Motives* of *Judging*; every body being apt to reſolve the Cauſe of another Man's differing in Opinion from him, into ſome particular *Byaſs* upon his Underſtanding. But this we do commonly, without examining whether the Perſon who differs from us, has not better Reaſons for his Diſſent, than we have for our Perſuaſion; whether the Opinion he is of be not, in the Reality of things, true, tho' he believes upon falſe Grounds; or whether we our ſelves are not diſpoſed to judg as we do, upon ſome of the like Motives that we ſuppoſe him to have followed. By which means we are often, not only guilty of the ſame Partiality which we charge upon others, but are either confirm'd in our Errors, or elſe prevented from making juſt Enquiries into the Truth of things; ſo that, if we are in the right, it is by chance, and more than we are able to prove to our ſelves, or others.

Upon which account, I think it a very prepoſterous and deceitful Method of proving a thing falſe, to aſſign ſome *peculiar*

liar Prejudices and *wrong Motives of judging*, which may *poſſibly* induce Men to be of ſuch an Opinion, tho' the Truth ſhould be of the other ſide, and which have often had the like Influence upon Men's Underſtandings in other Matters; and from thence immediately, without any further Proof, to infer, that ſuch and ſuch Perſons have *no other Reaſons* for the Belief of the point in queſtion but theſe, and conſequently, that they are in the wrong: this, I ſay, is not a fair way of arguing. But, after *plain* and *manifeſt Proofs* of the Truth of an Opinion, according to the *ſtanding Rules* and *Principles of Reaſoning*, it is not only *proper* to enquire how any Men came to be of a contrary Perſuaſion, but the Strangeneſs and ſeeming Unaccountableneſs of the thing make it *expected*, and in ſome reſpect *neceſſary*; in order to a fuller Satisfaction of thoſe, who, notwithſtanding all the *appearance of Evidence to themſelves*, may be apt to have ſuch favourable Notions of Mankind, as to imagine, that Perſons, who have the ſame Faculties, and all other Advantages of Knowledge that they have, would not deny what appears ſo plain to them,

them, except they had *ſome rational Grounds* for their Denial.

Having therefore, as I perſuade my ſelf, *fully*, and *evidently* proved the *Truth* of *Religion*; I think, I may now be allow'd to ſay; That *Atheiſm* and *Irreligion* muſt be the *Effect* of *Prejudice* and *Prepoſſeſſion* only, if any ſuch Cauſe of it be aſſignable.

And if we ſearch the Heart of Man, and look into the hidden Myſteries of Iniquity lodg'd there; if we conſider what falſe and corrupt *Reaſonings*, and what other Arts and Methods of Deceit are uſed by Men to delude themſelves, we ſhall ſoon diſcover the ſecret *Spring* and *Original* of all *Atheiſm* and *Unbelief*.

Now, the *Cauſes* from whence it proceeds are plainly theſe two; *The Fear of an After-reckoning for a wicked Life*, and *The Vanity of appearing either greater or wiſer than other Men*. The firſt of which is the *principal* and *moſt powerful* Cauſe, and is only aſſiſted, and ſtrengthened afterwards, by the Acceſſion of the latter. And what other account can be aſſigned? Or what other Reaſon can be given of the Riſe of *Irreligious* and *profane* Opinions.

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It cannot be the *Force and Evidence of Truth* which produces *Atheiſm*, as is manifeſt, not only from the *foregoing Proofs of Religion*, but from the *Confeſſion* and *Conduct* of the *Atheiſts themſelves*. It is not becauſe the Notions of *God*, *Immortality*, and *a Future State* ſhock the Underſtanding, and contradict the plain Principles of Reaſon, that they deny theſe Foundations of all *Religion*. Were the *Being of a God* conſider'd only as an *Hypotheſis*, to ſolve the Difficulties of *Nature* by, without thoſe troubleſome Conſequences of *Duty*, *Sin* and *Puniſhment*, the *Atheiſt* would not ſcruple *this Philoſophy*; and *Lucretius* himſelf would eaſily grant the *Soul* to be *immortal*, to be *ſeparated from the Body* and *reunited* again, would you allow him but this Concluſion, that neither *ſeparate*, nor *reunited*, it hath any *Senſe* or *Remembrance* of what was done *before the Separation*. *God* ſhould alſo enjoy the *Fulneſs of Perfection*, he ſhould be clothed with all the *magnificent Attributes* that Man could conceive, ſo his whole Employment was the *Comprehenſion of himſelf*, and the *Contemplation of his own Glory*, and he was not

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unneceſſarily troubled to take account of *our Actions*. This is the dreadful Apprehenſion which perverts Mens Reaſons, and makes them deny what they fear, when they are reſolved to run the hazard of it.

The quieting and laying theſe *Fears*, *Lucretius* confeſſes is the *whole Deſign* of his Philoſophy. Which is a farther Confirmation of what I have undertaken to maintain; as will appear from theſe following Remarks.

For firſt *this Philoſopher* obſerves, and ſeems to wonder at it, that the *Fears of Death* were *very general*, and made *ſtrong Impreſſions* upon the Minds of Men.

2. He affirms that theſe Fears were occaſioned by an *Apprehenſion* of *ſome other State after this Life*.

3. He takes notice only of thoſe whom we ſtile *Wicked*, that were *afraid* of a *future ſtate*; they were the chief Objects of his Pity and Compaſſion, who, beſides the Fear of *Scourges*, *Racks*, and *Priſons* in *this World*, were tortured with the Dread of *new*, and *more terrible Puniſhments*, in *ſome other*; and all his Arguments ſerve only for the Conſolation and Encouragement

L. 3. *v.* 1025, *&c.*

ment of ſuch unhappy Wretches, who, through *Fear* of *future Pains*, either denied themſelves ſome *preſent Gratification*, or were uneaſie under the Guilt of *paſt Actions*; none but the *Wicked* and *Impious* being concerned in all the *Fabulous*, and *Poetick Stories* of *future Torments*, which he derides.

Lib. 5. *ver.* 1222.

From all which it is very plain, that a *Reſolution to enjoy the Pleaſures of Sin*, and to live in them without *Check* or *Diſturbance*, is the reaſon why Men deny, and ſeek for Arguments to overthrow, thoſe Opinions, which would otherwiſe be embraced as moſt rational; as is manifeſt from *Lucretius*'s own Obſervations.

For the *univerſal Apprehenſion* of ſomething *after this Life*, which he plainly intimates, is no ſlight Argument of the *Truth* of *another State*: as, I am ſure, the *diſtinguiſhing Fears* of the *Wicked*, are a very ſtrong Proof of the *eſſential Difference* of *Good* and *Evil*, and the *Dueneſs* of *Reward* and *Puniſhment* accordingly. For, otherwiſe, why ſhould the *Wicked condemn* themſelves for what they do? or, ſuppoſing a *future State*, why ſhould *they*

expect

expect to be *puniſh'd* in it? Why ſhould they not rather conceive *God* to be of their *Side?* Why ſhould they not give him contrary Attributes, and make him *puniſh the Righteous* and *reward the Wicked?* Or, if that be too harſh a Notion of the *Deity*, why do they not change the Natures of *Good* and *Evil*, and call *Evil good*, and *Good evil?* The Conſequence is ſtill the ſame. If it be Wiſdom to live as they do, if they live *moſt up to their Nature*, and *moſt agreeably to their Reaſon*, what have they to *fear?* if this be their Caſe they may be ſure, that *Almighty Wiſdom* and *Perfection* will *approve*, and be *pleas'd with* their Actions. But if theſe Opinions offer too great a Violence to their Reaſon to be embraced by them, it is plain that they muſt acknowledge, not only that there is a *Difference* in *Actions*, but that *theirs* are *evil*; not only that *ſome Actions* deſerve *Reward*, and *ſome Puniſhment*, but that the *latter* is due to *theirs*, or elſe what reaſon is there for Fears? Or why do not *all Men* fear a *future State* alike, the *Righteous* as well as the *Wicked?* Now, when Men are reſolv'd to commit what they know to be *ill* and *puniſhable*, there is no Refuge left

left but to contrive ſome means of *Impunity*, ſome way of eſcaping the Sentence threatned; and this they promiſe themſelves by *denying* either the *Judge*, or the *Place of Puniſhment*. And this is the *true Cauſe* and *Spring* of *Atheiſm*. For no Man ever deny'd a *God* who thought his Way and Courſe of Life acceptable to ſuch a Being; no Man ever queſtioned a *future State* who could poſſibly perſuade himſelf, that, if there was one, *Happineſs* would be his Portion in it.

As then it is not a *Zeal for Truth* which makes Men *Atheiſts*, ſo neither is it a *generous Undertaking* to free the World from the *Bondage of Religion*. For they muſt needs be convinc'd that it would be very much for the Advantage of *Mankind in general*, if *all* Men lived up to the *ſtrict Rules of Religion*. What noble Ideas doth ſuch a Speculation as this afford us? and how diſmal would the Proſpect be, if *Atheiſm* ſhould ſpread as faſt as *Chriſtianity* did in the *firſt Ages* of the *Goſpel*? But not to purſue this Thought any farther, what *Bondage* or *Slavery* is there in *Religion*? and how is our *Liberty* abridged by the *Law of God*? Thoſe who bear the Yoke think it eaſie and plea-

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ſant, and, without a *future Reward*, preferable to *Atheiſm*, as much as a *juſt* and *eaſie Government* is to be preferred to *Anarchy* and *living Wild*. Why then ſhould they who never felt the Burthen complain of the Weight of it? but there are ſome Pleaſures and Enjoyments which Cuſtom hath made them fond of, and rendred difficult to be left off, and theſe they are reſolved to enjoy ſtill: but they cannot do it fully and to the height, without ſome Check and Regret till they have got rid of thoſe *Fears* of a *future Puniſhment* which their *own Conſciences*, and the *general Faith of the World* threaten them with: in order therefore to this End, every *little Objection* or *Suſpicion* is improved into an *Argument* againſt *Religion*; and that, by the advantage of *ſtrong Wiſhes*, and a *gradual Decay* of *contrary Impreſſions*, is heightned into *Demonſtration*; till, what, at firſt, their Luſts ſuggeſted to them, with a *perhaps* there *may be no ſuch thing* as *God*, or *a future State*, is, at laſt, ripen'd into a *bold Denial*.

And, when they have once got this Maſtery over themſelves, then do they ſit free, and deſpiſe the reſt of the World

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in Fetters, and laugh at what others adore. Then do *Novelty* and *Boldneſs* paſs for *Truth*, and the *Pleaſure of Believing* is made the *Ground of Faith*. For how exquiſite and tranſporting is the Pleaſure of a *new Notion* or *Invention?* and how are Men's Wits ſet upon the ſtretch to find out freſh Opinions, and to dreſs up old ones in a different manner, only to get the Character of ſuch as *think out of the road?* *Men* ſhall live like *Beaſts* in the *State of Nature*, and devour one another, *couch in their Dens at Night, and in the Morning ſeek their Prey*: *Beaſts*, on the contrary, ſhall be ſo *rational* as to erect Common-wealths, and Governments, if ſuch Notions as theſe will ſerve to eſtabliſh the Reputation of their Authors.

Beſides, the *expoſing* and *ridiculing common Opinions*, eſpecially the deſpiſing what is very much reſpected and admired, carries a peculiar Satisfaction in it; there being nothing which recommends any Notion or Reflexion, any ſtroak of Wit or Reaſon ſo much as the Boldneſs of it. From hence it comes to paſs, that *Treaſon*, and *Blaſphemy* are entertained with a greater Guſt than *Private Calumny*, and

and *Detraction*; and the ſame Expreſſion is counted wittier when it ſtrikes at *God*, or the *King*, than when it is levell'd againſt a Herd of *common Mortals*. For, to ridicule the greateſt Actions that have been done in the World, to laugh at the nobleſt and moſt celebrated Schemes of Knowledge that have ever been laid together, is thought to argue a Spirit capable of greater Performances. And to deſpiſe and contemn what the reſt of Mankind ſtand in aw of, ſeems to ſhew ſuch a *Superiority of Senſe*, or *Courage*, as eaſily tempts Men to affect this Character, without conſidering whether they are able to ſupport it.

Thus are Men confirm'd and eſtabliſhed in *Atheiſm*, by the *Vanity* of appearing *greater* or *wiſer* than *others*, and of being thought Maſters of *finer* and *more extraordinary Talents* either of *Wit*, or *Reflexion*: as is plain alſo from another Inſtance, in which Men ſhew themſelves to be very much influenced by theſe Motives in matters of Religion; and that is, a groundleſs unreaſonable *Diffidence* and *Jealouſie* of being put or impoſed upon; calling every thing *Trick* or *Impoſture* which they do not underſtand, or which

any Body elſe gets an Advantage by. For, by this means, they imagine, that they eſtabliſh to themſelves a Reputation of great *Sagacity* and *Reach*, and of *ſeeing far into matters*; whereas, in reality, this overmuch Cunning of theirs, only betrays the Weakneſs of their Judgments, and ſhews them to be of the ſame ſize of Underſtanding with thoſe fooliſh Politicians, who find a thouſand Myſteries in State-Affairs, more than the Managers themſelves ever knew of, and who think every the moſt natural, and undeſigning Action of a Prince, to be the effect of ſome ſecret Counſel, and Contrivance.

Now, that theſe before-mentioned are the *true* and *proper Cauſes* of *Atheiſm*; and that the Belief and Patronage of the *Doctrines* of *Irreligion* is *ſolely* the *Reſult* of *Prejudice*, and not *deliberate Reaſon*, will further appear from the following Reflexions.

1. Thoſe who go under the Name of *Atheiſts* or *Deiſts*, whether *real*, *pretended*, or *reputed*, are generally Perſons of *no great Reach*, or *Capacity*, Men of ſtrong Luſts,

Luſts, and irregular Imaginations, without a due Ballaſt of Reaſon; impatient of Thinking and Attention, and conſequently, unable to examine any Variety of Pretences, or to diſtinguiſh betwixt Colour and Argument. Thoſe of them who are furniſh'd with a better ſtock of *natural Senſe* than the reſt, have it wholly *unimproved* and *uncultivated*; or, if they have made any Advances in Knowledge by Study, or Induſtry, they have either *begun late*, and ſo have fallen into the middle of Learning, without the Aſſiſtance of the firſt grounds and Rudiments of it, applying themſelves to ſuch Books they lit upon, or which happened to be recommended to them, without due Choice and Direction; or elſe they have been chiefly converſant in *ſuch Studies* as have by no means qualified them to be *Judges out of their own Way.*

For a Man may be very well vers'd in *Hiſtory*, *Antiquities*, or *Experimental Knowledge*; he may be a great Maſter of *Language* and *Criticiſm*, and a nice Diſcerner of the *true Meaning*, or *Reading* of an *ancient Author*; he may have a juſt Reliſh for *Wit*, and *Elegance of Expreſſion*, and have Skill enough to diſcover the

Beauties and *Faults* of the *moſt celebrated Models* of Writing, and yet, after all, in matters of *general* and *abſtracted Reaſoning*, not be able to underſtand a *plain, eaſie Conſequence*. For, 'tis not difficult to obſerve how ridiculouſly oftentimes, Men of known Abilities in ſome of theſe, or the like reſpects, argue and infer in other Matters; and how incapable they are of making, or perceiving a juſt Deduction, in points of *moral*, or *civil* Knowledge, and ſuch in which the *Conduct of Life*, and the *Happineſs of Mankind* is immediately concerned: whereas, on the contrary, thoſe who are acquainted with the *general Rules*, and *Laws of Reaſoning*, and the *different kinds* and *manners of Proof*, are capable of making true Judgments and Inferences in *any Subject*, which they have been ever ſo little converſant in, upon a *bare explication of the Terms*, and *a juſt Relation of the Facts* belonging to the Matter to be judg'd of. Now, this is is a piece of *Knowledge*, which, I may venture to ſay, the *Favourers of Irreligion* have been always the greateſt Strangers to; and the leſs any of them have been acquainted with this kind of Learning, the leſs they have employed

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and exerciſed their rational Faculties, and the leſs common natural Senſe they have been born with, the ſtronger, more confident, and more unſcrupulous Atheiſts have they been.

2. Secondly, as we are ſatisfied, from the *Character*, and *Capacities* of the *Atheiſts*, that they are wholly determined to their Opinions by *Prejudices* and *falſe unequal Motives of Judging*; ſo are we further confirmed in this Perſuaſion by the *Manner* and *Proceſs* of their *Faith*. For they commonly *believe firſt*, before they enter upon any *Examination*, or *Proof* of their *Principles*. Whatever they underſtand of the matter, all the Arguments and Objections they are furniſh'd with are found out afterwards, not to ſatisfie and convince themſelves, but to make a ſhew of Defence againſt the Charge of others; they take up their Opinions haſtily and on a ſuddain; they do not proceed by Degrees, by cautious and wary Steps, weighing and ballancing the Arguments on both ſides, ſometimes inclining to the one, and ſometimes to the other, calling in the Advice and Reaſon of other Men to their Aſſiſtance,

and all along ſhewing a Concern and Fear of being miſtaken, ſuitable to the Importance of the thing to be judged of.

Thus indeed do Men commonly behave themſelves in a Change from *one Sect of Religion to another*, if they ſincerely aim at Truth, and are not govern-by any other undue Motive. But who ever heard of a Man who took this Method of turning *Atheiſt*? Which of them all can ſay he conſider'd, and compared the Proofs of both Opinions before he left the one, and took up the other? When was any body called in to plead in the behalf of *Religion*, before it was caſt off, and to ſettle the firſt Miſtruſts and Waverings of an *Atheiſtical Conſcience*? *Afterwards* perhaps, upon ſome Checks and Reluctance of his Mind, an *Atheiſt* may have had ſome faint Deſigns of examining into the Truth of Matters, and may have diſcours'd with others about it; but then a long Cuſtom of thinking and talking one way, and the troubleſome Conſequences attending a Change of Faith, may have indiſpoſed him to entertain or reliſh the Arguments for *Religion*; not to mention any thing of a *judi-*

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cial Blindneſs inflicted upon him from *God*, for his long and unreaſonable Oppoſition to the *Truth*. But, if an *Atheiſt* will examine fairly into the *firſt Riſe* and *Original* of his *Faith*, he will find that it was either a *haſty Effort*, occaſioned by *high Blood*, and a *rais'd Imagination*; or ſome *bold Strain of Wit*, which ſtruck him at a time when he was rightly diſpoſed to be pleaſed with it. And, if we ſhould examine into theſe things more particularly, I believe, it would appear, that *all irreligious Opinions* are *firſt* taken up *in Company*; and that no Man receives the *firſt Impreſſions* of *Atheiſm*, *alone*, from his *own calm* and *ſedate Reflexions*.

And thus, as *Irreligion ſprings* from *Prejudice*, ſo is it *nouriſhed* and *fed* the *ſame way*, viz. by a conſtant Application to ſuch Books and Company, as give it any countenance or colour of Defence; with an induſtrious avoiding and ridiculing the contrary; picking out ſuch things as miniſter moſt occaſion for Raillery; and magnifying every bold thing which is ſaid by any Man, without any regard to his other Opinions, or the Conſequences even of that which is liked; 'tis no

matter whether it really proves any thing againſt Religion or no, ſo it be thought, by the *Profeſſors of Religion*, to bear hard, either upon the *fundamental Principles*, or *any remote Doctrines* which are owned by them.

From whence it comes to paſs, that the *preſent Atheiſm* is a *promiſcuous Miſcellany* of *all the bold Notions* that have *ever* been vented by thoſe who are ſtiled Free-thinkers: where, whatever ſeems to be levelled againſt any Point of Religion is embraced as the moſt ſenſible and rational account that can be given of the thing; but thoſe Parts of Religion which are eſtabliſhed by the ſame Authors, are ſlighted and paſt over as weakly done; whereas I will be bound to prove, that there is never an *Article*, or *Duty* of *Religion*, profeſs'd by us, but is own'd and maintain'd by ſome or other of theſe bold *Free-thinking Authors*, which are ſo highly approved and commended by the *preſent Atheiſts*. And what a groſs Partiality is this, not to allow thoſe, whom they cry up for *unprejudic'd* Men, to talk a Word of Senſe or Reaſon, but when what they ſay makes for their Purpoſe?

3. But

3. But Thirdly, we have a more convincing Proof, that the *Doctrines of Irreligion* are the *genuine Iſſue* and *Effects* of the *Cauſes* before aſſigned, from the open *Confeſſion* of ſeveral *Atheiſts* themſelves; who, upon juſt Convictions of Conſcience, having diſclaimed their *Atheiſm*, have freely and ſincerely owned that they threw off *Religion*, without ever examining, or conſidering the Proofs of it; that they were diſpoſed and induced to entertain irreligious Notions by the *Power* and Influence of their *Luſts*, or ſuch vicious Habits and Cuſtoms of living, as they thought irreconcilable with a contrary Belief; that the Reaſons why they endeavoured to perſuade themſelves, of what their Courſe of Life inclined them to believe, were, to defend thoſe Liberties of Practice which they took, againſt the Cenſures of others, and to ſecure their own Minds in an eaſie undiſturb'd Enjoyment of them; that, commonly, the firſt and ſtrongeſt Impreſſions of Unbelief they were ſenſible of, were occaſioned by ſome bold Hints and Inſinuations, or ſome witty Ridicule or Raillery upon the Subject of *Religion*; that, as

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theſe, coming from others, either in Books, or Diſcourſe, gave them very great Pleaſure, and by that means Aſſurance, in embracing their new Principles, ſo were they further pleaſed and confirm'd together in the Belief of them, by applauded Trials, and Exerciſe of their own Wit the ſame way; eſpecially, when the general *Diſpoſition* of the Perſons they convers'd with, made this Entertainment very agreeable, and very frequent. All this have ſeveral Atheiſts, upon their *Repentance*, acknowledg'd.

And that which ſtrengthens the Argument drawn from hence, is, that thoſe who have renounced their *Irreligious Principles*, and given this account of themſelves, have been, ſome of them, Men of the *beſt natural Abilities*, and *greateſt acquired Improvements*, of any that ever took the Party of *Atheiſm*; and their *Repentance* has been *free* and *voluntary*, and not extorted by any frightful Repreſentations, or importunate Addreſſes, in the ſeaſons of Fear and Weakneſs; it has begun from themſelves, and been wholly owing to the over-ruling Impreſſions of a *Divine Power*, and not to *Human Perſuaſion*; and their Blindneſs and

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Prejudices being, by this means, removed, the Arguments for *Religion* have prevailed upon them by their own Strength, as ſuggeſted to them by their own Reaſon, without receiving any Advantage from the Management and Art of others.

And this I think ſufficient to ſhew, that *Atheiſm* proceeds from *ſtrong Prejudices*, and *falſe*, *diſproportioned Motives of judging*, and is not the reſult of *juſt Reaſoning*, and *impartial Reflexion*.

I have now gone through the ſeveral Branches of my Diſcourſe, which I propoſed to my ſelf in the beginning of it; and have finiſhed the Proof I undertook of *general*, or, as 'tis commonly called, *natural* Religion.

All that I have further to add upon this Subject, at preſent, is, to give ſome account of the Notions of *Atheiſm*, and *Deiſm*; which Words we are forced to uſe ſometimes promiſcuouſly, and in a different Senſe from the common acceptation, for want of a fit and proper Word to expreſs a *Belief*, or *Profeſſion* of *any ſuch Opinions* which take away the

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practical Influence and *Power of Religion.* For which reaſon I think it convenient in this place, that I may remedy any Confuſion or Miſtake, which the Liberty I have taken in the uſe of theſe Terms may have occaſioned, to ſet down diſtinctly what I look upon to be the *common Notions* of *Atheiſm* and *Deiſm*, and what *Ideas I ſhould chuſe* to affix *theſe Words to.*

By an *Atheiſt* is *commonly* meant ſuch a one as will own *no Being* under the *Name* and *Title* of *God.* And he who does acknowledge ſuch a Being, let his Conceptions of him be what they will, is reputed *no Atheiſt.* And, in *this Senſe* of the Word, it may well be made a queſtion, Whether there be any ſuch thing as an *Atheiſt* in the World? For, 'tis hard to meet with a Man who has not *ſome Idea* in his Mind, which he will be content to allow the *Name* of *God* to; tho', upon Examination, perhaps it will be found to be nothing elſe but a confuſed Notion of *ſome vaſt Power*, *Firſt Cauſe*, *Original Mover*, or *Immortal Being*, *enjoying Eternal Reſt*, *and Quiet.*

Now,

Now, according to this Notion of *Atheiſm*, he who profeſſes to *believe a God*, whatever *Nature*, *Characters* and *Attributes* he aſcribes to him, and at the ſame time *Denies* his *Providence*, or *Government of Mankind* is called a *Deiſt*.

But, in ſuch places where the Pretences of *Revelation* are acknowledged, and defended, he that is called a *Deiſt* is one who owns a *God*, and believes *ſome ſort* of *Providence*, and *natural Obligations*, but denies *all manner of Revelation*; who confines his *Duty* to matters of *Civil Juſtice* and *Commerce*; makes theſe his chief *Principles*, *not to injure another*, and to *keep his Word*; grounds his Practice upon the *Reaſon* and *Intereſt of Societies*, and his *own preſent Advantage*, not *Obedience to God*, or a *future Proſpect*; believes, *no future Life*, or only *ſuch a one* as can have no great Influence upon a Man's Actions here. This is the *common Uſe* of theſe Words.

But, by an *Atheiſt*, I think, may properly, and juſtly be meant, not only he who *abſolutely denies* the *Being of a God*; but whoſoever ſays *there is no God that governs the World, and judgeth the Earth*; there

there is *no God who hath appointed Laws and Rules for Men to act by*; there is *no God to whom Men are accountable for all their Actions, and by whom they ſhall be rewarded, or puniſhed in a future State, according to their Behaviour here*; and, in general, whoever holds ſuch an Opinion as *exempts him from all Obligation of Duty to a Superiour Being*, or *cuts off the Expectation of Rewards and Puniſhments* conſequent thereupon.

For *Atheiſm* is to be conſidered as a *Vice*, and not a *meer Error in Speculation*. And therefore, he who denies *Providence*, *Natural Law*, or a *Future State*, is as much an *Atheiſt* as he who denies *God's Being*: For, it's all one, with reſpect to Practice, to ſay *there is no God*, as to ſay *there's no Obedience due to him*, or *no Puniſhment for Diſobedience, if there be*: It is likewiſe all one to deny *divine Puniſhment directly*, and to deny the *Immortality of the Soul*, or the *Scriptures*, in the Senſe of thoſe who at preſent deny theſe things: For they who ſay the *Soul dies with the Body*, think hereby to prove, that *God cannot puniſh*; and they who *deny the Scriptures* do it, in order to ſhew that he *will not puniſh*, that is, *in another Life*;

Life; and, as to the *preſent*, they perceive that thoſe who are ſtiled *Wicked* fare as well, and have as large a Portion of the good things of this World, as their *Righteous Brethren*. The *End* and *Deſign* then *of all theſe Opinions* is the *ſame*; namely, to eſtabliſh *a Liberty for every Man to live as he pleaſes*, and *to do whatſoever is right in his own Eyes*; and what is this, but to ſay, *there is no God in the World*.

This is the Notion I have of an *Atheiſt*; and accordingly I have applied the word *indifferently*, as I had occaſion, to *any Perſons* who denied *any of the Principles* of *Religion* which I have endeavour'd to eſtabliſh: And the word *Deiſt* is to be taken in the ſame Senſe with that of *Atheiſt*, every where, but where we are particularly diſcourſing about the *Being of God*, as diſtinguiſhed from the *other Parts of Religion*.

But, in oppoſition to the Character which I have now given of an *Atheiſt*, by a *Deiſt* is to be meant, one who acknowledges *all the Principles of Religion here maintained*: who thinks he is obliged to inform himſelf truly of his whole Duty

to

to God, and to live up to the higheſt and pureſt Rules of *Morality* that he can form to himſelf, by the Aſſiſtance of his own Reaſon, and the united Lights of other Men who looks upon all the *moral*, or *practical* Part of the *Scriptures* as very uſeful and inſtructive, and conſequently what ought to be read and valued as *Tully* and *Ariſtotle* are, upon the ſame Subject: but does not believe any ſuch thing as *Revelation*, or aſſent to any of thoſe *peculiar matters of Fact*, or *Doctrines*, which are wholly grounded upon *that extraordinary way of Conveyance*, and are not *level to his Reaſon*, or *diſcoverable by it*.

And, if a *Deiſt* be ſuch a one as I have deſcribed, it would be as juſt a matter of Enquiry, whether there be any Perſons to whom this Title belongs, as whether there be any real *Atheiſts* in the World. For my part, I will not poſitively ſay there is no ſuch thing as a *true Deiſt*, in that ſenſe which I have now given of the word, becauſe, I believe, there hardly ever was any Opinion known among Men, which ſome body did not eſpouſe; but this, I think, I may venture to affirm, that it would be the moſt difficult thing imaginable to find a Man in a *Chriſtian*

ſtian Countrey, who was acquainted with the Books of *Holy Scripture*, and the *common Proofs* of *Chriſtianity*; who was fully perſuaded of the Truth of *all the Principles* of *Natural Religion here laid down*, and who ſeriouſly endeavoured to conform his Life to the *Moral Rules*, and *Precepts of the Goſpel*, and yet who denied *Revelation*, and all thoſe particular Truths which ſtand diſtinguiſhed by the Name of *Revealed Religion*: ſuch a Man as this, I believe, is hard to be met with. For it is not *Propheſies*, or *Miracles*, or *Myſteries*, which puzzle the *Faith* of thoſe who now go under the Name of *Deiſts*; but a *plain* and *full Diſcovery* of a *future State* of *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*. This is the ſhocking repugnant Doctrine, in compariſon of which, the *Trinity*, and *Incarnation* are eaſie Notions, and very reconcileable to their Reaſon.

Upon this account it is, that I have mentioned *Deiſts* as *Enemies* of *Natural Religion*, and ſo properly coming within my Subject, and not as *meer Oppoſers* of *Revelation*, which belongs to another Argument.

And now, having pointed out who they are that are particularly concerned in the foregoing Diſcourſe, it might be expected that I ſhould addreſs my ſelf to them to embrace thoſe Principles of Religion which I have there proved, and to beſtow ſome ſerious Thoughts about the Danger of their Unbelief; but I am too well acquainted with their Character to trouble them with any Advice of this nature: If they are not *convinced*, and bore down by *Arguments*, I am ſure they will never yield to *Perſuaſion*; neither indeed is it proper to go about to perſuade Men to *believe*; they only are to be applied to in this manner, who are ſatisfied of the Truth of what you would perſuade them to, but want ſufficient Motives and Incitements to *practiſe*.

I ſhall therefore ſhut up this whole Diſcourſe with my earneſt Prayers to God, that he would be pleaſed to incline and diſpoſe thoſe who are doubtful, and wavering in the Concerning Points of Religion, to weigh and conſider well the Proof it ſtands upon, before they venture to withdraw themſelves from under the Influence and Government of it; that he

he would defend the Innocent, and ſuch as are unacquainted with the Ways of Irreligion, from the falſe Suggeſtions, and Inſinuations of Unbelievers; that he would convince the Careleſs and indifferent of the abſolute Neceſſity of having ſome Religion; and that he would be further pleaſed to enable thoſe, who are already convinced of this Truth, to ſtop the Mouths of Gain-ſayers, by a ſteady and uniform Practice of their Duty, every way anſwerable to their Knowledge, and Profeſſion.

FINIS.

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THE

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OF

Religion in General, &c.

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